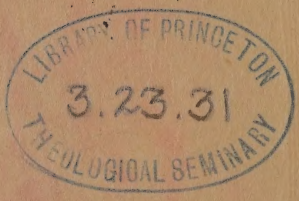

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THINGS MOST SURELY BELIEVED

Things Most Surely Believed

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A SERIES OF SERMONS ON THE APOSTLES' CREED

By
CLARENCE EDWARD MACARTNEY

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FOREWORD

Confusion of thought and lack of conviction are the plague of Christianity to-day. An English writer said some time ago that one could hear almost any opinion to-day from a Protestant pulpit.

For this deplorable, disgraceful, and dangerous condition, the pulpit must take its share of blame. Too often we who stand in the pulpit have neglected to declare unto the people the whole counsel of God, and to explain, according to the Scriptures, the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith. We have chosen rather to deal with the by-products of Christian life and conduct. But wherever the foundation truths are ignored or denied, there the Church must suffer and faith will languish.

If we are to have once more in our midst the joy and power of salvation, we must dig again the old wells of revealed truth. This series of sermons on the Apostles' Creed represents an effort to present to the people what Dr. Chalmers used to call "the grand particularities of the Christian faith."

Clarence Edward Macartney.

THINGS MOST SURELY BELIEVED

I

GOD

When a first-year student in the Theological Seminary, I went out to preach one Sunday in a New Jersey town. In the home where I was entertained there was a man, well along in years, who was, or claimed to be, an infidel. His argument was as follows: "If a man tells me that he has a horse which can trot a mile in three minutes, I tell him to bring out the horse and prove it. If you tell me that there is a God, I ask you to produce God and prove his existence."

No Christian claims to know God, nor would want to know Him in that way. By that kind of searching we cannot know the Almighty to perfection. The Christian believer does not say, "I know God," or "I see God," or "I think there is a God," but "I *believe* in God."

THE PLACE OF FAITH

The world to-day is tempted to make little of faith and in some respects the attitude of the Church has been such as to favor the discounting of faith. It is commonly said that it makes no difference what a man believes; the only thing

that counts is what a man is, and what a man does. But this is contrary to reason, for every man has some sort of creed, and his life is the expression of that creed. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." It is also contrary to revelation, for the Scriptures tell us that "without faith it is impossible to please God."

The most widely used confession of faith among Christians commences with the statement, "I believe." The emphasis is, first of all, on the "I." There are millions of people in the world, and millions upon millions have come and gone, and have poured like a Niagara over the precipice of death. But each one of those uncounted millions was, and is, a distinct personality and individuality. Life is a separate and solitary fact. No man can believe for another. I cannot believe for you; you cannot believe for me. But every man can believe for himself. When a man says, "I believe," he gives expression to the highest of which human nature is capable and rises to man's grandest stature.

Life and its facts remain the same, whatever hypothesis we adopt; but the belief in a personal God is the only hypothesis which will shed a light upon the dark path of our existence. The conviction which a Christian believer has concerning God arises from three sources: Man, Nature, Revelation.

GOD

I. MAN

A great French thinker said, "I think, therefore I am." His argument was that he must exist, else he could not have thought of himself. In the same way we are justified in our faith concerning God. The idea of God is certainly in the minds of men throughout the world to-day, and has been in the minds of man throughout all ages. The question is, How did this idea of God arise? We must choose between two answers. One is that man's cogitation and meditation resulted in the idea of a God. The other is that God exists, and that his existence accounts for the idea of God in man's mind. Certainly the latter answer is rational and simple. Some have said that clever priests invented the idea of God to further their selfish ends. But where did those priests get such an idea? Others have pointed out the low and gross conceptions of God which prevail among the heathen people, or such as prevailed among the pagans of antiquity. But where did the heathen and the pagans get their idea of God, even such a base and low thought of God? Others there are who vehemently assert that there is no God. But even the man who asserts that he is an infidel is an argument for the existence of God, for before he could deny that there is a God, he had to have the idea of a God in his mind. The natural explanation of that idea of God is the existence of God. God is that One,

than whom a higher cannot exist; and that idea of perfection which is in the mind of man must have come from God himself.

CONSCIENCE

Another fact in man which witnesses to the existence of God is conscience. Perhaps I can best explain what I mean by conscience by the following story from the "Confessions of Rousseau": When in Italy, Rousseau took a position as secretary to an Italian lady. After her death he fancied a pink and silver ribbon that one of the ladies had worn, and stole it. It was discovered in his possession, but when asked to give an account of it, he declared that Marian, one of the maids, had given it to him. The maid tearfully protested her innocence, and the look, Rousseau says, which she turned upon him would have melted the heart of a demon. The investigator dismissed them, saying, "Conscience by its sufferings will revenge the innocent." It was a prophecy terribly fulfilled. Rousseau tells us that the thought that he had unjustly accused the girl, and perhaps driven her to a life of shame, cut his soul with an edge that forty years had not been able to dull. Often in his sleep he would start up, as he fancied he saw the pleading eye and the tear-stained face of the maid he had wronged. In his most successful periods the ghost would leave him for a season, but only to return when

his fortunes were low, for he discovered that "remorse sleeps during prosperity, but wakes amid the storms of adversity."

How can we account for the tragedy of remorse and conscience? The simplest and most rational explanation is that conscience is the reflection of the moral law in man's life. It bears witness to a moral standard, to a difference between right and wrong. The common-sense explanation of such a standard is that there is an author of the moral law, One to whom we are accountable—God himself.

THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD

A third fact in man's life which bears witness to God is the history of man. If there is a God who has to do with man, then the history of man ought to show the evidence of His presence and power. At first glance, history may seem to be just a chaos and welter of greed and lust, war and violence, and sorrow and death. But when we look more carefully, we can discern something else. We discover that, although evil ofttimes seems to be in the ascendancy and is victorious over good, nevertheless the good has never left evil in undisputed possession of the field. Always there is a "power, not ourselves, working for righteousness."

II. GOD IN NATURE

In 1798 Napoleon set out on his expedition to

Egypt. Much to the disgust of his soldiers and officers, he took with him a considerable company of scientists and scholars and philosophers. One warm summer night these men were gathered together on the deck of the frigate. The stars were brilliant, and they were discussing whether or not the planets were inhabited. Some said, no; and others, yes. Then they began to talk about the origin of the universe. All took the position that natural laws and phenomena were sufficient to account for the origin of the world without a divine Creator. Napoleon, who had been standing near them and silently listening to their conversation, then introduced himself into the debate and, pointing with his hand to the brillant stars in the heavens, said, "Gentlemen, who made these?"

"Who made these?" A simple question, and one which went to the very heart of the matter. Who made the world? The world is a great effect, and common sense tells us that it must have had a sufficiently great cause. The world is not only a great effect, but it is an intelligent effect, and must have had an equally intelligent cause.

PALEY'S WATCH

Nothing better has ever been written on this subject than the famous argument of Paley. He tells us of a man who was crossing a heath and struck his foot against a stone. The man asked himself, "Whence came this stone?" His answer

is that, for all he knows, it might have been there forever. A little farther along, he strikes his foot against a watch. He asks himself how the watch came to be there, and it never occurs to him to give the answer that he had given for the stone being there. For when he examines the watch he finds what he did not discover in the stone, that its several parts have been framed and put together for a purpose, and that they are so adjusted as to produce motion, and that the motion is so regulated as to point to the hour of the day. If the parts had been of a different size, or arranged in a different manner, either no motion would have been produced, or when produced, would not have answered the use now served by the motion. He takes the watch with him, and by and by, to his great surprise, discovers that the watch has the property of producing in the course of its movements another watch just like itself. This only increases his wonder, and he concludes that the watch must have had a maker and a designer.

IN THE BEGINNING GOD

The world and nature, whether you look at the universe as a whole or at the body of man, is a marvelous and intricate machine, and the natural common-sense conclusion is that it must have had a maker. "In the beginning God" is still the best account we have of the origin of things. Some theorists have accounted for the universe

by the nebular hypothesis. A vast molten mass of that substance called nebula, of which the central portion was once our sun, began to rotate. As it cooled it began to contract toward the center, and therefore began to move more quickly, and as it moved, part of this original mass began to break off into a series of rings, and finally cooled from gas into liquid form, and thus arose our solar system. But still we must ask the question, "Who supplied the original nebula? and who started the motion?"

Others endeavor to account for life in all its forms through the development from a primordial germ, or bit of protoplasm. But what we want to know is, Whence came this promordial germ, this original protoplasm? Who endued it with the capacity and power to produce a Plato, a Michelangelo, a Milton, a St. Paul, or a St. John? However far back we succeed in building our path, still back of our utmost lies the great fact enunciated in the opening verse of the Bible, "In the beginning God."

So rational and obvious is this explanation of the universe, and so irrational and confusing the rejection of it, that we are still justified in saying to those who reject God as the maker of heaven and earth, what the book of Job said so many ages ago: "Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee, and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee. Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach

thee, and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee." When a great scientist like Pupin declares that his lifelong studies and explorations in the field of science have only served to confirm his faith in that God about Whom his peasant mother taught him in Europe, and about Whom he used to think when, as a shepherd lad out on the steppes of Serbia, he looked up to the stars and thought of their Maker, the Christian believer is not to be frightened out of the house of his faith by the skeptical bark of every boasting neophite of materialistic science.

III. REVELATION

The third source of our conviction and faith about God is revelation. The vastness and the order and design of the world can tell us of a mighty Creator. The pulsations of conscience in a man's life will tell him of good and evil and of One to whom man is accountable. But beyond that, had it not been for Revelation, we could know nothing of God's interest in humanity, his gracious dealings with man, and his plan for man's redemption. For all this, we must depend upon revelation. That God has come out of the silence and darkness and spoken unto man, and that in the Scriptures we have a credible account of what was spoken, has ever been the confidence of the Christian Church.

CHRIST THE CLIMAX

This revelation of God reached its climax in Jesus Christ. As St. Paul phrased it, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." What Paul meant is, that the full revelation of the mind and the purpose of God came through Jesus Christ. God had spoken in divers manners and in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, but finally, in these last days, by his own Son, who is the "express image of his person."

It will always be true, what the Psalmist says, that the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork; that day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. But as to the greatest exhibition of God's glory—how he can forgive and restore a fallen and sinful humanity—nature has nothing to say. The stars, however eloquent their witness to the Creator, are silent as to a Redeemer. And, although day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge, they cannot utter a single syllable as to how man can find his way back to God. For all this we depend upon Christ.

THE CHRISTIAN KNOWS GOD

It is because of this knowledge of God which

came with Christ that the Christian believer has so great an advantage over all others. The richest man in the world, Crœsus, once asked the wisest man in the world, Thales, What is God? The philosopher asked for a day in which to deliberate, and then for another, and then for another, and another, and another; and at length confessed that he was not able to answer, that the longer he deliberated, the more difficult it was for him to frame an answer. The fiery Tertullian, the early Church father, eagerly seized upon this incident, and said it was an example of the world's ignorance of God outside of Christ. "There," he exclaimed, "is the wisest man in the world, and he cannot tell you who God is. But the most ignorant mechanic among the Christians knows God, and is able to make him known unto others."

This was more than a boast on the part of Tertullian, for back of it is sober truth and fact. The Christian believer who has faith in Christ knows God and is able to make him known to others. In his beautiful valedictory address to his disciples Jesus said, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." He appealed to their intuitive, traditional, and inherited faith in God as a ground for faith in himself. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." But in our human experience we often turn that great utterance about and say, "I believe in Christ, therefore I believe in God."

II

JESUS CHRIST, HIS ONLY SON

Nineteen hundred years ago, in a secluded spot in the Cæsarean desert, Jesus said to his disciples, "Who do men say that I the Son of man am?" They gave him different answers. Some thought he was Elijah; others, Jeremiah; and still others, John the Baptist come to life. But Jesus persisted in his question, "Who say ye that I am?" Then Peter cried out, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

The great New England preacher, Channing, said that so long as we follow Christ and obey his words, it makes no difference to Christ what rank we ascribe to him. But such a position is contrary, first of all, to the mind of Christ Himself. At least on two occasions, once speaking in seclusion to His disciples and once in a debate with the scribes and Pharisees, Christ went out of the way to ask questions as to His own person and rank, saying to the disciples, "Who say ye that I am?" and to the scribes and Pharisees, "Whose Son is he [the Messiah]?" The position that it makes no difference what rank we ascribe to Christ is contrary again to the natural inquiry of the mind and to the needs of the heart. No one can contemplate the fact of Christ without ask-

ing the question, "Who is this? Whence came he? By what authority does he speak?"

Jesus towers over human history like a great mountain which casts its shadows across a river. The river flows on; the mountain remains. The river of time flows on; but Christ remains the same. Unique and solitary in His influence, in His claims, in His character, He demands some kind of an explanation. As the people asked when all the city was stirred as Christ came riding into Jerusalem, so men must ever say, "Who is this?"

I. THE FACT OF CHRIST

Confronting this fact of Christ, the first thing which attracts our attention is the nature of his teaching. His teaching has the ring of absolute and final authority about it. He calmly dismisses those who have gone before Him and says, "But I say unto you." He identified Himself with the truth. He is not one standing at the crossroads, pointing men to the right way, nor is he seeking after it himself, but One who is the Way, the Truth, the Life. His teaching abounds in sublime and timeless utterances as to God, Man, and Destiny. Who would think of improving upon the sayings of Jesus? Such sayings, for example, as these: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"; or, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me"; or, "What shall it profit a man if

he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

The teachings of Jesus are not subject to the limitations of any one period, or any age, but suit all men of all ages. Time cannot wither nor custom stale them. The great biologist, George John Romanes, who forsook Christ, but toward the close of his life returned to Him, says of the teachings of Jesus: "The absence from the biography of Christ of any doctrine which the subsequent growth of human knowledge, whether in natural science, ethics, political economy, or elsewhere, has had to discard, constitutes a negative argument almost as strong as the positive one of what Christ taught. When we consider what a great number of sayings are recorded, or at least attributed to Him, it becomes most remarkable that in literal truth there is no reason why any one of His words should ever pass away, in the sense of being obsolete." The ages roll by, and as they roll they seem to confirm what Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, by My words shall never pass away."

When they heard Jesus preach in the synagogue at Nazareth, the people, astounded at His wisdom, exclaimed, "Whence hath this man this wisdom?" That is the question we must face. When the officers who had been sent out by the authorities at Jerusalem to arrest Jesus returned without their prisoner and were asked to give an account

of their dereliction, they said, "Never man spake as this man!"

Not less remarkable than the teaching of Jesus is his character. That it was of rare beauty is admitted by all. The records we have of his life show him to be without a flaw and without a fault. No other religion is grounded upon the character of its founder. But Christianity stands or falls with the absolute purity of Jesus. I speak not now of the claims of Jesus to sinlessness, but how He appeared to men. How the Son of God redeems men from sin may be a mystery; but if any flaw had ever been found in Christ, the question of how he redeems from sin would never have been discussed, because no man who is a sinner could have redeemed mankind.

As to the stainless record of Christ, we have the testimony, first of all, of his friends. Peter fell down at his feet in the fishing boat and besought him to depart from him, for he, a sinful man, thought himself condemned in the presence of Jesus. John said that in him was no darkness. Paul, that he knew no sin. Then we have the indirect tribute paid by his enemies. The very charges which were laid against him redound to his credit and show his moral splendor. With what did they charge him? With blasphemy and drunkenness, because he was seen in the company of sinners, publicans, and harlots; with Sabbath-breaking, because he healed the sick on

the Sabbath day; with being in league with Satan, because he broke the spell of the devil over the lives of men. Every charge which they made against him redounds to his credit. Other good and great men there have been, but only one about whom such a book as the "Imitation of Christ" could be written. Christ alone is altogether worthy of the imitation of mankind. As Sidney Lanier said in his "Crystal Christ":

> "But thee, but thee, O Sovereign Seer of time,
> But thee, O poet's Poet, Wisdom's tongue,
> But thee, O man's best Man, O love's best Love,
> O perfect life in perfect labor writ,
> O all men's Comrade, Servant, King, or Priest,
> What *if* or *yet*, what mole, *what* flaw, what lapse,
> What least defect or shadow of defect,
> What rumor, tattled by an enemy,
> Of inference loose, what lack of grace
> Even in torture's grasp, or sleep's, or death's,
> O, what amiss may I forgive in thee,
> Jesus, good Paragon, thou Crystal Christ?"

Side by side with the fact of Christ's teachings and his character, we must face the fact of his influence. Since he came into the world he has been the dominant figure of human history. The words of Jesus have done more to transform and soften humanity than the words of all the sages and philosophers put together. His example is a star of hope for mankind. Art seeks to reflect his features. Literature is studded with his golden sayings as the night with golden stars,

and music echoes the Incarnation, Atonement, Resurrection, and Second Advent. In every age he has those who are ready to die for him. This night, innumerable spires and towers and crosses pierce the heavens and tell where men gather to worship him as God, while songs of Christian worship follow the sun in his journey around the world.

If nineteen hundred years ago, just when he was commencing his work, before the world knew much of him, the person and the work of Christ suggested a question as to his place and rank, and evoked such great answers as, "Elijah," "Jeremiah," and "John the Baptist," still more, after the lapse of ages, does the fact of Christ suggest a great question and demand a great answer. "Whose Son is he?" "Who do men say that I am?"

II. THE ANSWER OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

To this question, "Who is Jesus?" the New Testament has one simple, profound, grand answer. It is the answer that Peter made so long ago—"The Son of the living God." In discussing this answer and question, we must remember that there is only one Christ, the Christ of the New Testament. Outside of that, silence and darkness. We can therefore dismiss from our discussion the imaginary Christ who has appeared in literature, or in critical hypotheses. The only

Christ with whom we have to deal is the Christ who appears in the New Testament.

This Christ of the New Testament is plainly the Son of God. Before Christ was born his divine rank was declared. One angel said to Joseph that he would save his people from their sins, and another angel said to Mary that the holy thing born of her should be called "the Son of God." The demons, according to the Gospels, saluted Christ as the Son of God. Whoever may have doubts as to the deity of Jesus, the demons had none. "And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ, the Son of God."

Then we have the testimony of his friends and contemporaries. Their conviction as to Christ was the result, not of the study of texts, but of confronting the person of Christ. Peter declared that he was the Son of the Living God, and in the sermon which he preached to Cornelius he spoke of Jesus Christ as "Lord of all." John, referring to Jesus, said, "The Word was with God, and the Word was God"; and he tells us at the close of his Gospel that it was written that men might believe that Jesus was the Son of God. Thomas, convinced as to the resurrection, cried out, "My Lord and my God!" Paul, when he had been converted, preached "straightway in the synagogues that Jesus was the Son of God," the very claim which before had made him so fierce a per-

secutor and destroyer of the Church. Repeatedly the men of the New Testament refer to Christ as Lord. This word "Lord" in our English Bible is the equivalent for the name which the Jews employed when they read in the Bible the name of Jehovah. Therefore, when Peter speaks of Jesus as "Lord of all," and when Paul says, "There is one God, our Lord Jesus Christ," or when he addresses his letters to the Church in Thessalonica and commences with the greeting, "Unto the Church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ," there can be no doubt that what he meant is that Jesus is of divine rank and power.

Jesus is also worshiped; and it was a principle of the Jewish religion that God alone was worthy of worship. Paul speaks of all those that "in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord"; and in another place he says that every knee shall bow at the name of Jesus, and every tongue confess that Christ is Lord.

More striking still is the testimony of Jesus himself. Any one who has been present in court, listening to a trial, has felt a thrill when the accused person himself has been called to the witness stand. As he takes the stand a hush falls over the court room, for every one, judge and all, realizes that the man upon the witness stand knows the truth, the facts of the case. The question is, Will he tell it? Confronted then with the

problem of Christ, we call Christ himself as a witness.

First of all, there is what we might speak of as indirect witness; that is, Christ claimed to have powers and attributes which belong only to God. He claimed pre-existence—"before Abraham was I am"; omnipotence—"all power is given unto me in heaven and on earth"; omniscience—that only the Son knew the mind of God; omnipresence—"I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"; infallibility—"heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall never pass away"; sinlessness—"Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (here it is important to note that when Christ challenges others to convince him of sin, it is impossible for us to think that he convicted himself of sin); absolute loyalty and dominion over the lives of his followers—that for his sake they must be ready to sacrifice and sever the dearest human ties; the right to judge men and to allot to them their eternal destiny—that before him should be gathered all men and all nations to be judged; the power to forgive sin—that remission of sins was to be preached in his name. Surely the mere man who would make such claims as these would be either a wicked impostor, or a fool and lunatic.

Then we have the direct testimony of Jesus that he was the Son of God. This claim is clearly made in the great prayer which he uttered on the

night before his crucifixion, when he said, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." There is no doubt that he repeatedly claimed to be the Son of God, for on one occasion, when the Jews took up stones to stone him, Jesus said to them, "For which one of my good works do you stone me?" They replied, "For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because thou, being a man, makest thyself equal with God." When Peter in the desert near Cæsarea Philippi, in response to the close questioning of Jesus, declared that he was the Son of the living God, Jesus not only did not disavow this answer, but rejoiced in it, and blessed Peter for uttering it, saying that it was given unto him by the inspiration of God.

Another striking instance of how Christ in the most explicit terms claimed to be the Son of God was when the man whose eyes he had opened had been cast out of the synagogue. Jesus went to him and said, "Believest thou on the Son of God?" The man answered, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?" Jesus replied, "Thou hast seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee." When Philip said, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," Jesus answered, "Philip, have I been so long time with thee, and yet hast thou not known me? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father?" When at the trial

of Jesus, the suborned and bribed witnesses could not agree among themselves, Caiaphas, the high priest, thrust them all aside, and said to Jesus, "I adjure thee by the living God, tell me, art thou the Christ, the Son of God?" Jesus answered, "I am."

We have seen, then, that as to his teachings, his influence in human history, and his character, Jesus is an extraordinary person and One who demands an explanation. He condemns the world to the task of explaining him. The New Testament explanation is that this Jesus was the Son of God.

Is it possible that this is a false explanation and a wrong answer? If false, it must have originated in one of two ways. Either the reporters, the authors of the Gospels, lied about Christ and put these high claims in his mouth, or Jesus lied about himself. Consider the first proposition, that the Gospels lie about Christ. But who, even if he lied about Christ, could have invented his sayings? We can understand how Plato could have put into the mouth of Socrates the great sayings which he atributed to him in the dialogue, but who could have put into the mouth of Jesus his great teachings? As John Stuart Mill says in his essay on Theism: "Who among his disciples or their proselytes were capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels?

Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee, and certainly not St. Paul, whose character and idiosyncrasies were of entirely a different sort. Still less the early Christian writers, in whom nothing was so evident than that the good which was in them was all derived from a higher source." As Rousseau once said, "It would take a Jesus to invent a Jesus."

Well, then, if the authors of the Gospels did not lie about Jesus, did Jesus lie about himself? Or was he a foolish simpleton who really thought he had this high rank and power? In that event, we are confronted by the unthinkable thing that out of a colossal humbug and fraud has come the greatest and most beneficent influence of human history. The scribes and the Pharisees, when they asked Pilate for a guard at the sepulcher, lest the disciples should come and steal the body of Jesus, and loose on them a great hoax concerning his resurrection, referred to Jesus as "that deceiver." And Christ was either "that deceiver" or the Son of God. But that explanation of Christ as the grand deceiver of history, the king of impostors, is not adequate to account for the miracle of Christianity or the influence and abiding sway of Jesus.

If, on the other hand, the witness of the New Testament and the witness of Jesus himself is true, then all the blessed influences of Christianity have flowed from this fountain of divine light

and knowledge as naturally as the light pours from the sun in heaven. If Christ is the Son of God, then we can understand why his Church has endured through the centuries, and why corruption, schism, and unbelief within, and bloody persecution from without have not been able to destroy it. The gates of hell have not prevailed against the Church because it is founded upon the Rock, the Eternal Son of God.

If Christ is the Son of God, then we have a firm foundation upon which to build our faith. There was none other good enough to pay the price of sin, but the Son of God could pay it, and did pay it upon the cross. If he is the Son of God, his teachings and his example are absolute in their authority. If he is the Son of God, he has power to comfort and to help me. Since he is the Son of God, he has the right, through his death on Calvary, to bestow righteousness upon me and freely pardon all our sins. Since he is the Son of God, he is the King of the ages and the Judge of the world. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.

To know and to follow Jesus as the Son of God is joy and peace and life everlasting. To such a Christ we can say:

> "Perdition catch my soul,
> But I do love thee! and when I love thee not,
> Chaos is come again!"

III

BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY

In one of his great definitions of Christianity, Paul wrote, "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." The coming of the Son of God into the world and his taking upon him the form and the nature of man is, and always will be, a great mystery. For that matter, the coming of any life into the world is a mystery. One who was arguing recently that men should be ordained and set apart to the ministry solely on the ground of their Christian character and without any inquiry as to their beliefs, protested against the submission to the candidate for the ministry of questions as to their belief in doctrines such as we affirm in the Apostles' Creed, and said that no man should be asked to believe what he himself and no one else could understand. But the glory of Christianity has always been faith. As Tennyson put it in "In Memoriam," "Believing where we cannot prove." If these great truths, such as the divine Sonship of Christ, his miraculous conception and birth, his atonement, his resurrection, his ascension, and his second advent, could be thoroughly explored and explained by man's reason, they would not be sufficient for the needs of man's heart.

When the New Testament uses the word "mystery," one which Paul employs so frequently in speaking of the gospel, it means a truth which could be learned only by revelation, and not, as in the popular use of the term, that which is inexplicable, enigmatic, and unknowable. The fact and answer of the incarnation of God in Christ is a mystery in that it is a truth which man has learned by revelation alone. His searching could never have found it out. But now that it has been revealed, man can act upon the fact revealed. If in the fact revealed about the coming of Christ there is much that is beyond our comprehension and analysis, that is not strange, for the beginning of all life is a mystery over which science, which can tell us so much about the progress and change of things, has shed not even the feeblest ray of light. Pondering over the mystery of his own birth and existence, the Psalmist said: "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth." If this be true of the conception and birth of man, how much more of the conception and birth of the God-man, Jesus Christ.

In discussing the doctrine of the Virgin Birth, we shall, for the sake of clearness and simplicity, divide the subject into two parts: first, the fact

of the Virgin Birth; and secondly, the meaning of the fact, or its place in Christian faith.

THE FACT OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH

That Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, and conceived miraculously by the Holy Spirit, has been the faith of the Christian Church in all ages. We are not to hold the Christian hymns, or the Christian creeds, responsible for the belief in the Virgin Birth, for back of those ancient creeds and those ancient hymns was the faith which produced them. The antiquity and universality of the belief in the Virgin Birth of our Lord creates at least a presumption in favor of its truth. But the question arises, "How did such a belief originate?" The general and ancient belief in the resurrection of Christ is best accounted for by the *fact* of the resurrection. So is it with the ancient belief of the Church in the Virgin Birth of our Lord: the rational and simple way to account for that belief is the *fact* of what was believed to be true.

WHAT THE GOSPELS SAY

We might be willing to give serious consideration to so ancient and universal a belief as that in the Virgin Birth of our Lord, even if the fact of it had not been related in the Scriptures. But for multitudes of Christian believers, only the narrative of such a birth in the Scriptures themselves would induce them to accept it as a fact. This

narration we have in the beautiful records of the birth of Christ in the Gospel of St. Matthew and the Gospel of St. Luke. These are the two Gospels which deal at greatest length with the events of our Lord's earthly life. Waiving altogether for the moment the question of divine inspiration, the New Testament has been demonstrated to be a credible document. This is true particularly as to the Gospel of Luke. Luke's other historical writing, the Acts of the Apostles, is, admittedly, one of the masterpieces of historical composition; and although he is writing of one of the most difficult periods in the history of the Roman Empire, dealing with a great number of countries, provinces, and cities, and changes of administration, he cannot be found guilty of inaccuracy. In the prologue to his Gospel, immediately before he relates the birth of Jesus, Luke tells us how he has made every effort to get from the original sources the facts about Christ which he relates. There is no doubt that Luke was a careful, painstaking, and reliable historian, and it is this reliable historian who commences his Gospel with an account of the Virgin Birth of Jesus.

GENUINE PARTS OF THE TWO GOSPELS

The ancient manuscripts, upon which the text of our modern translations of the New Testament are based, all contain these narratives in Matthew and Luke of the birth of Jesus. They are

genuine sections of the two Gospels in which they are found. Wiess, a great New Testament scholar, writes: "There never were forms of Matthew or Luke without the infancy narratives." If we reject these narratives of the Virgin Birth in the two Gospels, then we have rejected the two Gospels themselves, and discredited them as historical records. Matthew and Luke tell us that Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, just as surely as they tell us that he was tempted of the devil, or that he died on Calvary.

OBJECTIONS TO THE VIRGIN BIRTH

More than any other great doctrine of Christianity, this doctrine has recently been the target of unbelief, and has been singled out as the most improbable and unpalatable fact of the Gospels; and even Christian believers, who say they accept some of the other great truths of Christianity, are reluctant to accept the fact of the Virgin Birth. The real objection, however, as we shall see, is not to this particular event at the beginning of our Lord's earthly life, but to the whole idea of a divine and supernatural Christianity. If the objection is merely to one of the mysterious facts of the gospel, then, why, may we ask, has the Virgin Birth been singled out above the others? What is more mysterious, more contrary to human experience in the Virgin Birth of Jesus, than in the fact of his death on the cross

providing satisfaction for the sinner and reconciling the sinner to God, or in his resurrection from the dead or his ascension into heaven, or his coming again in glory to judge the world? All the facts are beyond man's experience and the compass of his reason. Yet, if we begin by saying, "I believe in God," all of these facts can be received. We must not forget that the first and most natural doubter as to the Virgin Birth was the virgin mother herself, who said to the angel who announced the great thing to her, "How shall this be?" The angel answered and said to her, "With God, nothing is impossible." If we leave out God, all the doctrines of Christianity are unthinkable and impossible. But if we say, "I believe in God," they are all reasonable and acceptable.

"Admit a God—that mystery supreme!
That cause uncaused! All other wonders cease!
Nothing is marvelous for him to do;
Deny him—all is mystery besides."

THE GENEALOGICAL TABLES

Those who object to the Virgin Birth are sure to mention the fact that the genealogical tables in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, which trace the descent of Jesus, both trace his descent through *Joseph* from David. They say that this could have no meaning if Jesus was not the natural son of Joseph. For the present, we need not take

up the question as to whether these tables give what was the legal descent of our Lord, with Joseph as his *legal* father, or whether, possibly, Mary also was of the line of David. All that we need to do now is to point out that the very men who put these tables in their Gospels are the men who tell us that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, and they are conscious of no contradiction between the narratives which say he was born of the Virgin and the tables which seem to trace his descent through Joseph. Even in writing these tables, both Matthew and Luke are careful not to say that Joseph was the father of Jesus. Matthew writes: "Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom [the feminine pronoun] was born Jesus." Luke writes: "Jesus began to be about thirty years of age, being *as was supposed* the son of Joseph."

REFERENCES TO JESUS AS THE SON OF JOSEPH

Those who object to the Virgin Birth point out that in the Gospels Jesus is frequently referred to as the "carpenter's son," "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph," and "Joseph's son." This, we are told, cannot be made to fit in with a doctrine of a virgin birth. But how else could the people of Bethlehem and Nazareth, Capernaum, and elsewhere have spoken of Jesus? They knew no differently, and to all outward appearances Joseph was the father of Jesus. On

one occasion, Mary herself said to Jesus, "Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." But this does not necessarily mean that Joseph was the natural father of Jesus. It is but an echo of the popular thought of the parentage of Jesus, and although Jesus at this time had spoken about his "father's business," it may be that he himself was not yet conscious of his miraculous entry into the world.

THE SILENCE OF MARK AND JOHN

Much has been said of the silence of Mark and John as to the Virgin Birth of our Lord. We are told that such a fact, if true, and if known to Mark and John, could not have been omitted from their Gospels. But let us see. Where does the Gospel of Mark begin? It begins with the baptism of Jesus by John—that is, with the public life and ministry of Jesus. The fact that in such a history of Jesus, commencing at such a period of his life, Mark should tell us nothing about the birth of Christ in no way invalidates or refutes the fact related by Matthew and Luke about the birth of Christ, any more than the silence of Rhodes' "History of the United States," which commences with the year 1850, invalidates the facts of the Colonial history of the United States as related by Bancroft.

But what about John? His Gospel is the latest of the Gospels, and John had closer contact with

Mary than the other disciples, for on the cross Christ committed his mother to the keeping of John. If Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, it is inconceivable that John should not have known of it. We agree to that. But when men say that because John does not relate the birth in his Gospel, that proves that there was no such initial event in the earthly life of Jesus, we cannot agree. After a sublime statement of the fact of the Incarnation, that the Word, which was God, became flesh and dwelt among men, John, like Mark, commences with the public ministry of Jesus and his baptism by John the Baptist. A somewhat parallel case is the history of John the Baptist as related in the Gospel of John and the Gospel of Luke. Luke goes back to the beginning and gives us his fascinating account of the birth of John the Baptist to the priest Zacharias and his wife Elisabeth; but John abruptly introduces John the Baptist into his narrative by saying, "John bare witness of him"—that is, Jesus. But who would argue that because John says nothing about the circumstances of the birth of the Baptist, those circumstances as related by Luke are false?

The right way to put it, is not to say that only two Gospels out of the four tell of the miraculous birth of Jesus, but that the *only two Gospels which tell of his birth* say that he was born of the Virgin Mary.

THE SILENCE OF ST. PAUL

St. Paul, we all agree, is the great teacher of Christian doctrine. Why, then, was St. Paul silent about this initial fact of the life of Christ? Paul hardly ever refers to the incidents of Christ's earthly life, save his death, and what immediately preceded it, the Lord's Supper. But what he says of the resurrection, as well as the institution of the Lord's Supper, shows a full knowledge of the facts of Christ's life. It would be strange, indeed, if Paul had never heard of the Virgin Birth. But there was no particular reason why Paul should have declared or commented upon the fact of the Virgin Birth. He gives Christ the pre-eminent place, a place above all the creation, as one will see who reads the first chapter of his letter to the Church at Colossæ, and his teaching that Jesus by his death redeems men from sin, requires a sinless Christ, free from the corruption of human nature, which he would have shared, had he come into the world as other men enter it, by natural generation.

A DANGEROUS ARGUMENT

This argument from silence is generally a dangerous one, and an unsound one, and never more so than in this instance. Apply this argument to the Gospel of John, and what is the result? The result is that we must dismiss and deny, not only the Virgin Birth of our Lord, but his temptation

by the devil in the wilderness, his transfiguration, his institution of the Lord's Supper, his sermon on the mount, and his ascension into heaven. If the test of what is true and necessary in Christian doctrine be a fourfold narration in the Gospels, then the whole Christian message would have to be given up as false.

Although Mark and John and Paul do not relate the event of the Virgin Birth, none of them denies it, and all of them make great statements about Jesus which are in harmony with the narratives of Matthew and Luke. Mark commences with this tremendous sentence, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." John commences by saying that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God." And St. Paul tells us that "when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law"; and again, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself." These great statements not only do not deny or contradict the Virgin Birth, but they would require us to assume such an entry of Christ into the world, even if Matthew and Luke had not told us how he came.

THE LAST EVASION

Unable to take the narratives of the Virgin Birth out of the two Gospels which relate it, and confronted by the fact that St. Mark and St. John

in their Gospels do not deny the Virgin Birth, but make statements about the person of Jesus which would seem to require some such entry into the world, the opponents of this essential Christian doctrine fall back on the idea that the Christian disciples tried to account for the pre-eminence of Jesus by applying to him a myth of miraculous conception and birth after the manner of the pagans. One popular modern preacher says: "To believe in the Virgin Birth is one of the familiar ways in which the ancient world was accustomed to account for unusual superiority." Another popular preacher writes: "I think the doctrine of the Virgin Birth found its place in the Creed because the purity of Jesus seemed to his followers to demand such a miracle." Practically the same thing, only with more lucid style, was said by Thomas Paine in his "Age of Reason": "Mythology had prepared the people for the belief of such a story as the Virgin Birth. Almost all the extraordinary men that lived under the heathen mythology were reputed to be sons of some of their gods. It was not a new thing at that time to believe a man to have been celestially begotten."

Any one who takes the trouble to read the story about the birth of Hercules and Plato and Augustus Cæsar and Zoroaster will discern at once the gulf which is fixed between these myths and the sublime narratives of the New Testament.

Writing centuries ago, and answering this same charge that the story of the Virgin Birth of Christ was only a myth, comparable to the myths about other famous personalities, Origen, in his reply to Celsus, said: "Since Celsus has introduced the Jew disputing with Jesus and tearing in pieces, as he imagines, the fiction of his birth from a virgin, comparing the Greek fables about Danæ and Auge and Antiope and Melanippe, our answer is that such language becomes a buffoon, and not one who is writing in a serious tone." With their inherited and traditional Jewish prejudice against all pagan thought and custom, nothing is more preposterous than that the first Christian disciples and writers of the New Testament should have borrowed from pagans the myth of the Virgin Birth, and thus accounted for the birth of their Saviour and God.

Whence, then, came the universal belief in the Virgin Birth of our Lord? It could not have been borrowed from the Gentile world, nor could it have come from Jewish sources. An integral portion of the Gospels, an essential doctrine of Christianity, it must have come from the fact. The only explanation of the belief received and accepted by the whole Church is that Christ, as the Gospel narratives tell us, was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. If Christ was that the Gospels declare him to be, the Eternal Son of God, and pre-existent, that he

came into the world to save sinners, that God was in Christ reconciling man to himself, then such a mode of coming as that of the Virgin Birth would appear to have been altogether necessary. Human wisdom, uninformed beforehand, could never have devised such a manner of coming; but now that the fact has been revealed, the mind of man can receive and accept the fact.

THE ALTERNATIVE

The alternative is not pleasant to contempate. If Christ was not born as the Gospel narratives say he was, then he must have been the natural son of Joseph and Mary, born out of wedlock, or the son of Mary with an unnamed father. One of the great assailants of Christianity in the early ages was Celsus, who introduces a Jew with the story of how Christ was born of a virgin who had been turned out of doors by her husband, a carpenter by trade, because she was guilty of adultery with a soldier named Penthera. But whether with Joseph for a father, before or after wedlock, or with an unnamed father, a Jesus so born could not have been the Redeemer of mankind.

SUCH A BIRTH QUALIFIED CHRIST TO BE OUR REDEEMER

Those who look upon Jesus as just a great prophet, teacher, and example will not be troubled by the abandonment of the doctrine of the

Virgin Birth. But those who believe that Jesus came into the world to do the work which the New Testament tells us he came to do—that is, to save sinners, "for this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners"—those who believe this cannot abandon the Virgin Birth without abandoning their Lord and Redeemer. And why? Because in the Incarnation Christ assumed our nature. "The Son of God became man by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, and so was, and continues to be, both God and man in two distinct natures and one person forever." It was this Person who became our Redeemer. By virtue of his divine Sonship, absolute authority and infinite power belong to all that he spake and to all that he did for sinners on the cross. Yet it was only in his human nature that he was able to represent mankind and make satisfaction for the sin and guilt of the human race. As Dr. Charles Briggs once well put it: "The man Jesus would be a Prophet, a Hero, a great Exemplar, but not the Saviour of mankind. He might be the last and greatest of the heroes of faith, but not God Incarnate. Only a God-man who had taken human nature into organic union with himself and so identified himself with the human race as to become the common man, the head of the race, could redeem the race. The doctrine of the Virgin Birth gives us such a God-man. Natural

generation could not possibly give us such a God-man. Therefore, the doctrine of the Virgin Birth is essential to the integrity of the Incarnation, as the Incarnation is to the doctrine of Christ and Christian salvation."

The hope of the Christian believer rests on two pillars: first, What Christ has done; and second, Who Christ is. The value of the work that was done on the cross depends altogether upon who did it. Over and over again, the New Testament tells us that Christ died for us, that he bore our sins, that he drank our cup, that he paid the penalty for our sins. Whatever difficulty we may have in conceiving of how so great a work could be accomplished, we can at least understand that it could never have been accomplished by one who was born into the world just as any other man, and in whose nature there was the inheritance of weakness and of sin. The Virgin Birth gave to the world the God-man. Such a God-man is able to do the work of redemption. We cannot see how any other could have done it. Neither can we see how such a Redeemer could have come into the world in any other way than by that which is related in the Gospels. Jesus Christ, the God-man, is the bridge between sinful humanity and the holiness of God. If we break that bridge down, nothing is left of Christianity as a religion of redemption. A Christ who did not come into the world by way of the Virgin Birth,

taking upon him our nature, yet without the taint of sin, is as helpless to redeem the world and to rule the nations as a Jesus who never rose from the dead, and whose dust reposes to-day in some unknown Syrian tomb.

IV

WAS CRUCIFIED, DEAD, AND BURIED

All who come into this world must leave it by the door of death. There is nothing strange, therefore, about the fact that a man died. But Christ was the only man who came into the world *to die*. That was the great purpose of his coming.

The fact that Christ died is emphasized more than any other fact in the Apostles' Creed, for it has a fourfold statement, like the beat of music: "Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried." This emphasis upon the death of Christ is in harmony with the prominence given to the death of Christ in the Scriptures, and in the life and work of the Christian Church.

What a strange thing is fame! Jesus was born under one Roman emperor, Cæsar Augustus, and crucified under another emperor, Tiberius; but of all the great men of Rome, whether in the republic or in the empire, emperors, conquerors, statesmen, orators, or philosophers, the best-known name to-day is that of the man who was governor of Judea when Jesus was crucified at Jerusalem. Millions throughout the world every Sunday pronounce his name when they confess their faith in Christ and say, "He suffered under Pontius Pilate."

THE DEATH OF CHRIST A HISTORICAL FACT

The human, historical fact that Christ died is as well attested as any great fact of history; indeed, better attested, because it has more witnesses. Throughout the world the followers of Jesus celebrate from time to time the Lord's Supper, a feast which he gave to his Church to keep in remembrance of him. This feast commemorates his death. Immediately after his death this fact of his mortality had its reverberation and repercussion throughout the world. The perplexed governor of Judea, one of Pilate's successors, Festus, said to King Agrippa, when he came to visit him, that he had a certain man left a prisoner by Felix, concerning whom his accusers brought no charge of evil things, as he had supposed, but had certain questions against him of their own religion, and "of one Jesus *who was dead,* whom *Paul affirmed to be alive.*" The fact that Jesus was dead was accepted by that time by both the friends and the enemies of Christ. But there were some in the world like Paul who believed that he not only died, but had risen to life again.

TACITUS AND CHRIST

In his account of the burning of Rome by Nero, Tacitus writes: "To put an end to these rumors, Nero sought for guilty persons and inflicted the most cruel tortures upon persons suspected for

their infamous practices, who were commonly called Christians. This name they took from Christ, who was condemned to death under Tiberius by the procurator Pontius Pilate. This pernicious superstition, suppressed for the moment, had since overflowed, not only in Judea, where was the source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all crimes and shames meet together."

Jesus died. There can be no doubt of that, any more than there is doubt as to the fact that Cæsar or Napoleon or Cromwell died. The babe who was born in Bethlehem and who grew to be a man expired on the cross. The author of the wonderful sermons and the parables and the worker of the gracious miracles had paid the debt which all men owe to nature. Those hands which had been lifted so many times in blessing upon the sick and sorrowing and sinful were now rigid in death, with nails driven through their palms. That voice which had so often fallen upon the ears of the disciples, and had brought hope and comfort to many a troubled and suffering soul, was now quenched in the smoke of death, and those eyes of love and affection which had looked with pity and compassion upon the world were now cold and blank, without light and without love. Jesus was dead. When the Roman soldiers, in order to bring the slow process of crucifixion to a conclusion, came to give the fin-

ishing blow and break the legs of the victims, they found that in Christ's case it was not necessary, for he was already dead. And so they reported to Pilate. When his death was confirmed, his friends begged his body from the governor, and, wrapping it in a clean linen cloth, laid it away in the new rock-hewn tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. So Christ "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried."

WHO IT WAS THAT DIED, AND WHY

That a man who had been a carpenter, and then became an itinerant peasant teacher in Judea and in Galilee, and who assailed the sins of his day and denounced the ecclesiastical rulers and priests, should have been accused by those whom he had denounced and charged with crimes, and then put to death on a cross, was nothing strange. Such a fact deserved no commemoration or reiteration in the world and through the ages. If that was all, the fact of his death would never have been commemorated.

The strange thing about the death of Jesus, and the thing which led to its commemoration and celebration, was the fact, first of all, of the son and nature of him who died; and second, the purpose of his death. We must remember who it was that died upon the cross. It was he whom we have confessed to be the Eternal Son of God, and who came into the world by a miracu-

lous conception and birth. That a carpenter should have died was not strange; but that the only Son of God should have died—that is a strange, a marvelous thing. So marvelous, indeed, was it that, if we can credit the Gospels, the sun veiled his face, and the earth quaked when Christ died.

THE MEANING OF HIS DEATH

In the Gospels and throughout the New Testament, the fact of Christ's death is declared over and over again. But there is also in the New Testament, on almost every page, an account of the meaning of the death of Christ and the results which flow from it. If we had just the fact of Christ's death described and stated, and no interpretation of the fact, that would be an enigma, for we should ask ourselves: "Why is this fact of a man's death given such prominence? Why emphasize it more than his teaching, or his life and example?" If, on the other hand, we had, as we do have in the New Testament, an explanation of the meaning of Christ's death, and a declaration of the blessings which flow from it, and yet no account of his death, that, too, would be an enigma, for we should be compelled to ask ourselves, "When and where and how did this Jesus die, from whose death flow such wonderful blessings and benefits?" Thus we have in the New Testament the statement of the fact, the

death of Christ, and the explanation of the fact. The fact without the explanation is empty and meaningless; the explanation without the fact is absurd.

When, therefore, the Church confesses that it believes that Jesus Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, it means to say that it believes that Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, was crucified, dead, and buried; and that the purpose of his death was to save sinners. To confess that Jesus Christ died involves a confession of faith in the forgiveness of sin. Christianity started, not upon theory, not upon inspiration, but upon the acceptance by a company of people that God had wrought in the Lord Jesus Christ, and his death on the cross, a great redemptive act and deed. His death was for sin. It was a *vicarious* death, because there was nothing in Christ, in his person, or in his conduct, which explains his death. It must have been a death for others. It was an *expiatory* death, in that it made satisfaction for sin, not his own sins, but the sins of others. It was an *atoning* death in that by his death men are reconciled to God. "We are reconciled," said the Apostle, "by his death."

THE CROSS IS THE TOUCHSTONE

Once, in Florence, I went on a Sunday to visit a Waldensian Church. It was a noble and dignified Church, but I was surprised to see over the

pulpit a great cross—surprised, because this was in one of the most ancient and conservative of the Protestant Churches. When I expressed my surprise to the Waldensian pastor, he said: "We have put the cross there in order to let the people know that this is a Christian Church." To the people of Italy, a cross over a church is a symbol of Christianity. In another than a merely architectural sense, it is the cross over a church which tells whether or not it is a Christian Church. There are plenty of Churches which take to themselves the name of Christian, but which either ignore, deny, or belittle the fact for which the cross stands, the death of Christ. Christianity's sacred emblem is not a cradle; nor is it a scepter; nor is it a crown. It is a cross. That cross means that Christ died for sinners, and that through faith in him we have forgiveness and life eternal.

HAS THE CHURCH MADE A MISTAKE?

There are those who claim that the Church has made a mistake in giving such pre-eminence to the fact of Christ's death, and the meaning of that fact, as it is related in the New Testament. In one of his recent books, Sir Conan Doyle complains that the Church has made too much of the death of Christ and not enough of the life of Christ, in which, he says, he is far more interested.

If the Church has made too much of the death of Christ, and if this never-ceasing celebration of

his death, the Lord's Supper, is a mistake and not in keeping with the teachings of Christ and his apostles, then the sooner we know it the better. How then shall we discover whether or not the prominence, we may well say, the pre-eminence, given to the fact of Christ's death is in keeping with what Christ and his apostles believed, and taught others to believe? There is but one way, and that is by examining the teachings of Christ and his apostles.

THE CROSS COMES FIRST WITH THE APOSTLES

The great and heroic figure of the early Church was Peter. The substance of his preaching, as we have it in the book of Acts, was this: Jesus of Nazareth whom the Jews had crucified was the Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah, appointed to be the Judge and Saviour of men. Therefore it was the duty of men everywhere to repent of their sins and believe in Christ. When they did this they would receive the remission of sin. In the first of his Epistles, Peter writes to comfort and strengthen believers in Jesus who are suffering persecution. Peter had been the companion of Jesus for three years, and must have remembered many of the comforting sayings of Christ and many of his merciful acts, which would have been applicable for citation in the case of these persecuted Christians. But there is not a word as to this. The one great fact which he holds up

before these troubled believers is the fact that Christ died for their sins. He exhorts them to patience and fidelity by reminding them that they have been redeemed, not as slaves, by silver and gold, but with precious blood, even the blood of Christ.

In the first of his three letters, John says that the whole world lieth in sin. He teaches also that God forgives the man who confesses his sins; and then to this message he adds the definite Christian message of forgiveness through Jesus, saying that the blood of Jesus, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin. He interprets the love of God as God loving us and sending his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And in the Apocalypse, amid so much that is obscure and mysterious, the one clear, predominant, sublime, and unmistakable figure is that of the Lamb who was slain for the sins of the world.

Wherever one opens the writings of St. Paul, it is of the cross that he is speaking. Wherever he goes, he is determined to know among men nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified. He writes that he delivered unto men *first of all,* that is, first, not merely in order of utterance, but in importance, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. He tells us he will not glory save in the cross, and he takes the great evidence of God's love to man to be in the fact that God commended his love toward us in that, while we

were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Had we opened that great heart, which Chrysostom called "the heart of the world," we might have found graven upon it these words: "The Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." Men are not sure as to the authorship of the Letter to the Hebrews, whether Paul wrote it or some other. But no one disputes the *meaning* of this letter, for its one idea, illustrated and explained in so many ways, is that Christ is mankind's great high priest who offered himself as a sacrifice unto God, never to be repeated, for the sins of the world.

THIS FACT IS FIRST IN THE GOSPELS

The four great biographies of Jesus, which we call the Four Gospels, differ from other biographical works in that they devote so much space to the death of their hero. This is in contrast with the biographies of other great men. In the biographies of most men it is their accomplishments, what they said or what they wrote, or what they did, which take up most of the space. The account of their death comes in a brief statement at the end of the book. Elsewhere in the Bible, men are so treated. Its greatest characters it dismisses with the briefest words. But in the case of Christ in the Gospels, we have something altogether and very strangely different. It is quite evident that the authors of these four books considered the death of Christ the pre-eminent

fact about him. Only two of the Four Gospels tell of the birth of Christ; only three of his temptation; only two of the Sermon on the Mount; only two of the ascension. The Transfiguration, the Temptation, the Lord's Supper, and the Agony in the Garden have no place in the Gospel of John; and in all the Gospels the sketches of the Resurrection are brief. But each one of the Gospels relates in full the betrayal, arrest, denial, trail, torture, and death of Jesus. If one counts the verses in the different Gospels, and then counts the number of verses devoted to the last night and day of Christ's life, he will discover that in Matthew one-fifth of the text is given to the death of Christ; in Mark, two-fifths; in Luke, one-fourth; and in the Gospel of John, one-half.

This fact demands an explanation. What made these men dwell so much upon the fact of Christ's death? It could only have been because that when they wrote they attached to his death the most profound significance. And where did they get their idea and impression? It must have been from Jesus himself.

THIS FACT COMES FIRST WITH JESUS

When John the Baptist first saw Jesus he cried out, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." Jesus knew well the meaning of John's allusion—that is, that he was to be

a sacrifice for sin. At the first Passover he said: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," meaning the temple of his body. To Nicodemus, a few days afterwards, he said that "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." When the Jews insisted upon a sign, he said that "as Jonah was in the belly of the whale, even so the Son of man should be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." In his parable of the Good Shepherd, he referred to his approaching death as a voluntary death. When the Greeks came to visit him, and he saw in their coming a sign and token of the conquests of his gospel, how they would come out of every kindred and tribe and people, he cried out in jubilation, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me!" On the Mount of Transfiguration, when he appeared in glory with Moses and Elijah, the subject which he discussed with them was his decease, his death, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

Nor were his references to his death just occasional or incidental. In the most direct and careful and positive way, he tells the disciples both the fact and the manner of his death; that he would be betrayed into the hands of the Jewish rulers; that they in turn would hand him over to the Gentiles—that is, the Romans, who would put him to death by crucifixion. Over and over

again we hear him say, *"The Son of man must suffer."* "Let these sayings," he said, "sink down into your ears; for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men." These sayings did *"sink down"* into their ears and into their hearts. That is the only explanation of the strange fact that the death of Christ occupies so prominent a place in the Gospels.

HOW HE FELT TOWARD HIS DEATH

The peculiar way in which Christ felt about his death can be understood from three incidents. When Peter had confessed him as the Messiah, and then Jesus had told the disciples of his coming rejection and crucifixion, Peter, thinking that such a fate was impossible for the Son of God, cried out, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." But Jesus said, "Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou art an offense unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but that be of men." The only explanation of this terrible rebuke given to the man, whom, but a moment before, Jesus had publicly thanked and praised for his confession, is that Christ's future crucifixion and death was the great reality to him, the climax of the ministry of his reconciliation, and that he who would tempt him to turn back from it was his enemy and the enemy of mankind, and the friend and agent of Satan.

This same peculiar attitude toward his death

we note in what Christ said when the Greeks came to visit him. At first he cried out, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified." But when he thought of the price that he was to pay, the death on the cross, he exclaimed, "Father, save me from this hour!" And what shall we say of Gethsemane? Why did Christ not meet his death calmly and without evidence of distress and anguish as Socrates, or many another noble man, or ignoble man, martyr or criminal, has met his last end? There is but one answer, but one explanation of that strange scene in the Garden of Gethsemane, that pathetic but vain appeal to the sleeping disciples, and the agony which brought the blood from his brow and the imploring cry from his lips, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me"—and this is that it was not the physical death, with its dark accompaniment of shame and ignominy, from which Christ was shrinking, but a death such as no man before had ever faced, *death for sin.* His soul was being made an offering for sin.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Most striking, and to us most precious, among all the teachings of Christ about his death was his institution of the Lord's Supper. Jesus selected the night of his betrayal as the solemn hour for showing in the plainest and most unmistakable terms the meaning of his death. He was

to die on the morrow. Neither the taunts of his foes nor the requests of his friends drew from him this great and beautiful explanation. "Language changes from age to age, and in transmitting thought from one generation to another there is always some risk of the true and original idea being lost sight of. It was wise forethought, therefore, on the part of Jesus to explain his death by a sacred rite whose symbols and elements could speak a universal language." As they were eating the Passover Supper, Jesus took bread and said, "Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of me." Then he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sin." That, then, the remission of sin, was the great end and purpose of the death of Christ on the cross. Pilate wrote over him on the cross the motto, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." But the real motto for the cross was that last word of Jesus, "This is my blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sin."

THE CROSS IS THE PROPHETIC FACT

After his resurrection, Jesus went through the Old Testament and showed to his disciples how his death had been foretold. Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in

all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. He said to these disciples, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" Again, "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." What would the Church not give to-day to have that whole sermon of Christ, when he opened the Scriptures concerning himself! But from the brief fragments which remain we know that his cross was the central theme of that last sermon.

THE CROSS A TIMELESS FACT

Jesus, in his human nature, died under the reign of Tiberius, in the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate, at Jerusalem. But the cross is an eternal fact. Christ is what John calls him in the Apocalypse, "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." From the beginning of the ages, it was God's purpose to redeem and to atone for sin.

THE CROSS THE KEY TO HISTORY AND DESTINY

The cross is the interpretative fact. John tells us in his great vision of the Apocalypse that he saw on the throne a book written within and on the back side, sealed with seven seals. This book contained the destiny of the universe. The angel

cried, "Who is worthy to open the Book and to loose the seals thereof?" And no man in heaven nor on earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the Book, nor to look thereon. John wept much because no man was found worthy to open and to read the Book. Then he beheld, and lo, in the midst of the Throne stood a Lamb as it had been slain; and he came and took the Book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the Throne.

Christ on the cross is the One, and the only one, who interprets our own personal life and destiny. Pavel Petrovitch, in Turgenev's great Russian novel, "Fathers and Sons," presented the princess who once loved him, but had baffled him with her rejection, a ring with a sphinx engraved on the stone. After she died in Paris, he received back the ring. Over the sphinx she had drawn lines in the shape of a cross, and wrote to him that the solution of the enigma was the cross. The cross alone can interpret our sorrows and sufferings, and make us strong and ready and glad to endure them.

The great Greek mathematician, Archimedes, once said, "Give me a place to stand and I will move the world." All that Jesus asked for was room enough for a cross on which to die. "Lift me upon a cross," cried Jesus, "and I will lift up the world." "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

THE CROSS AND THE BURDEN OF SIN

But best of all, and greatest of all, the cross delivers from sin. How better can I put this than in the words of the great dreamer who tells us how his Pilgrim lost his burden: "He ran thus till he came to a place somewhat ascending, and upon that place stood a cross, and a little below, in the bottom, a sepulcher. So I saw in my dream that just as Christian came up with the cross, that his burden loosed from off his shoulders and fell from off his back and began to tumble and so continue to do, till it came to the mouth of the sepulcher, where it fell in, and I saw it no more."

Thousands upon thousands have come to that same place in their journey and there have lost the burden of their sin. Christ died for our sins, the New Testament tells us, and thousands of humble believers in Jesus will rise up out of every age and out of every nation to testify that he has not died in vain.

V

HE ROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD

Among the interesting relics of Thomas Jefferson is his copy of the New Testament. He had gone through the Gospels, scoring out with his pen all passages which presented Jesus as a supernatural person. The records of his miraculous birth and all the miracles were deleted, together with all statements which declared Jesus to be the Son of God. In this deleted New Testament the Gospel of Matthew ends with these words: "And he rolled a great stone to the door of the the sepulcher, and departed."

"For the historian," said Renan, "the life of Jesus finishes with his last sigh." If either Thomas Jefferson or Ernest Renan were right, the world would never have heard of Jesus Christ. If the story of Jesus had ended with his last sigh on the cross, or when Joseph of Arimathea rolled the great stone to the door of the tomb in the garden, there never would have been a New Testament from which Thomas Jefferson could have deleted passages not to his liking, or which Renan could have amended to suit his taste. The beautiful fragrance of the life and example of Jesus, the power and influence of his teaching, and the memory of his great works—all would

have perished and been buried with him in his grave, if that stone which Joseph rolled to the door of the sepulcher was the end of the story.

THE EMPTY GRAVE, THE CRADLE OF THE CHURCH

We have a Christ in whom we can believe today and a Christianity about which we can write, only because on the third day he rose again from the dead. The empty grave is the cradle of the Church. If Christ did not rise from the dead, then his grave is the tomb, not only of a man, but of a religion, of a world's hope. Matthew Arnold's terrible lines would then sum up the story of our Lord:

> "Now he is dead, far hence he lies
> In that lorn Syrian town;
> And on his grave with shining eyes,
> The Syrian stars look down."

BELIEF IN THE RESURRECTION FOUNDED THE CHURCH

Whether Christ rose from the dead or not, one thing is certain: the belief that he had risen created the Christian Church. Whatever happened at the grave of Jesus, the belief that something great and wonderful had happened there sent the disciples forth into the world to preach the gospel. There Christ hangs upon his cross between the two thieves, his thorn-crowned head sunken upon his breast, the blood and the water pouring from his side where the soldier had thrust in his spear. The last pang has been felt, the last in-

sult given, and the final and awful penalty of sin tasted. Darkness comes down on the cross and upon all who stand about it as Jesus cries out with a great voice and gives up the ghost. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea now take the body down from the cross, embalm it according to the Jewish custom, and then put it away in the new rock-hewn tomb in the garden, where they roll a great stone to the door of the sepulcher and depart. Friday night passes, and then the Sabbath. Early on the next day, the first day of the week, a few women come through the lifting mist to the sepulcher, not to see a risen Lord, but to weep at his tomb and anoint his dead body. It was a farewell to hope.

So it was at the beginning of that memorable third day; a few mourning women coming with their spices to anoint a dead body, and a band of dejected and disappointed disciples at Jerusalem ready to scatter and go their ways because the crucifixion had quenched their great expectations. But before that day came to an end, there were in and about Jerusalem a company of men and women holding the belief that was to turn the world upside down. It was the belief that Jesus rose again from the dead the third day.

HOW DID THIS BELIEF ARISE?

There is no doubt that the belief that Christ had risen sent the disciples out into the world

and established the Christian Church. The question before us now is, How did this belief arise? Did a great external fact create the belief? or did the belief spring from a delusion, or some sort of a misunderstanding, or some kind of a fraud? Christian faith has always answered that the belief is founded upon the Fact of the Resurrection.

MANY AND INFALLIBLE PROOFS

St. Luke, who is the great historian of the New Testament, tells us in the introduction to his famous history, the Book of Acts, that during forty days Jesus showed himself alive to his disciples by "many and infallible proofs." Let us now examine these many and infallible proofs. But before taking them up in order, it is proper to say that a resurrection from the dead was certainly suitable to the Person of Jesus as he is presented to us in the Gospels, a Jesus who came into the world by a miraculous conception and birth, who said that he existed before Abraham, that he was the eternal Son of God, who claimed all authority and the right to allot to men their eternal destiny, and the power to forgive men their sins, and who himself wrought great miracles, calling dead men back to life—for such a Jesus a resurrection from the dead was a suitable conclusion to his earthly story, far more congruous and suitable than the end given him by

Thomas Jefferson—a great stone rolled to the door of his sepulcher. This argument from the person of Christ is not one which we can ignore. It was one of the chief points made by Peter in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, when he asserted and defended the resurrection, saying of Christ, "Whom God hath raised up; having loosed the pains of death: because *it was not possible* that he should be holden of it."

THE PREDICTIONS OF JESUS

Jesus repeatedly foretold his death and his resurrection. When the scribes and Pharisees asked for a sign of his right to the extraordinary claims he was making for himself, Jesus said he would give them no sign save the sign of Jonah, that as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so the Son of man should be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. On another occasion he said: "Destroy this temple [referring to his body], and in three days I will raise it up again." In the most explicit manner he told his disciples that he was to be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified, and that on the third day he would rise again. Such predictions were known not only to the friends of Jesus, who seemed to have forgotten them, but also to the enemies of Jesus, who paid much more attention to them; for when Jesus had been cruci-

fied and buried, the scribes and Pharisees asked Pilate for a special guard at his tomb, saying, "Sir, we remember what that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again." It is true that a prediction before an event is not direct evidence for the event. But in this case, the predictions of Jesus have a very important bearing on the argument, and for this reason: if Jesus repeatedly declared and taught that he would rise again from the dead the third day, and yet did not rise from the dead, he must have been either ignorant and self-deceived, or the archdeceiver and impostor of history, "That deceiver!" as the Pharisees called him. But it is impossible to regard the Jesus whose personality we have in the Four Gospels as either an ignorant, duped, and self-deceived man, or an impostor and deceiver.

THE FOUR GOSPELS

To be competent witnesses to such a great event as the resurrection from the dead, it is required that those who relate such an event should, first of all, be honest men who will tell the truth, so far as they know it and understand it; and also men who are in a position to know the facts, either at first hand, as eyewitnesses, or through the testimony of others who were eyewitnesses. The authors of the four Gospels impress us as men who are competent witnesses. They are sober, hon-

est, reputable writers with not the slightest suggestion anywhere of a purpose to deceive, but only to tell the truth as they know it; and they sink their own personalities in the great personality of their hero, Jesus of Nazareth. Two of them, Matthew and John, were members of the band of twelve disciples, and therefore eyewitnesses; while the other two, Mark and Luke, were the companions and friends of eyewitnesses. It is possible that Mark also was a witness of Jesus in the resurrection. He was at least the intimate friend of those who were witnesses. No theory as to the inspiration of the Gospels is necessary when we come to weigh this evidence of the resurrection. All that we need to ask ourselves is, "Are the records credible or not?" How careful one of these authors, St. Luke, was in searching for the facts and sifting the evidence, we can learn from his introduction to his Gospel, where Luke says, "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us, even as they delivered them unto us who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word. It seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou wast instructed." Here Luke tells us that he got his

facts from those who in the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word—that is, from the apostles themselves.

THE NATURE OF THE TESTIMONY

Whatever the Gospels do or do not tell us, they certainly tell us that Jesus, who had been crucified and buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, rose from the dead on the morning of the third day, and was seen then by his friends and disciples and appeared unto them and conversed with them in different places and under different circumstances through a period of forty days, when he disappeared finally from their view. This body of the resurrection was the body in which he had died and in which he was buried.

These four narratives bear the mark of independence, and one of the interesting features of them is how one supplements the other. For example, Luke tells us that Peter ran to the tomb on hearing the angel's message. Mark does not tell us of the visit of Peter, but he does relate that there is a special message for Peter, while St. John adds that Mary Magdalene was the one who had informed him. Again, St. Luke tells us that Peter saw the linen clothes by themselves and went home wondering. But St. John adds that the napkin was separate from the linen cloth, wrapped together in a place by itself, indicating no hasty stealing of the body, but as though the

body had vanished without disturbing its wrapping. Again, St. Luke says that when Christ appeared to the apostles in the evening he was mistaken for a spirit, a ghost, John does not mention the incident, but in his account of what is evidently the same appearance, he gives the reason for that fear and for thinking Christ was a ghost by telling us that Christ appeared suddenly within closed doors. On the other hand, John says, "He showed them his hands and his feet," but without any reason stated, while St. Luke tells us why—that is, that they had taken him for a ghost.

DISCREPANCIES

Much has been made of apparent discrepancies in the fourfold narrative of the resurrection of Jesus. But when we come to examine these discrepancies we find them to be far from serious. For example, John says it was dark when the women came to the tomb, while Mark says the sun was risen. Matthew says they found the grave closed, but Mark says that the grave was open. Matthew says they saw an angel; Mark, a young man; Luke, two young men; and John, two angels. Matthew and John say the women departed in great joy to tell the disciples; but Mark says they were so frightened that they told no one.

However these minor differences may perplex us, they in no way impair the validity of the witness of the four Gospels to the one great fact

that Christ was risen. An angel would appear in human form. It is not strange that one of the evangelists should speak of him as a man, and another as an angel. Gabriel is called a man in Daniel, and an angel by Luke. If there were two angels, and not one, it is quite conceivable that one was not always visible, and hence some of the evangelists could speak of one only. Again, if St. John tells us of the fifth appearance of Jesus that the disciples were glad, and Luke tells us that they were terrified, this surface discrepancy is at once explained by the information given us by Luke that the disciples were terrified because they thought Jesus to be a ghost. But after he revealed himself unto them, it was altogether natural that they were glad. This is the fact related by John; the first fact of their terror is related by Luke.

Any one who has done historical writing or investigation is familiar with the variant accounts of any historical event. Take, for example, the Gettysburg speech of Abraham Lincoln. From those who ought to have been in a position to know the facts as to the composition and delivery of this famous speech we get the most irreconcilable accounts. But the thing about the four Gospels in their narrative of the death and resurrection of Jesus which sets off this event from all other events, is their grand agreement as to the one Great Fact, that Christ, who predicted his

resurrection, was crucified, dead, and buried, and that he rose again the third day.

WHY HE APPEARED ONLY TO HIS FRIENDS

Attention has been called to the fact that Jesus in the Gospels is described as appearing to his friends only. Why not to his enemies also, to the scribes and to the Pharisees, to the soldiers who crucified him, to Caiaphas and Pilate who condemned him? This objection to the evidence for the resurrection must have been raised very early, for St. Peter, in his account of the resurrection given to Cornelius, says that he appeared to "chosen witnesses," not to Pilate who had seen him but once, not to the populace in general, not to the scribes and the Pharisees, but to the disciples and intimate friends of Jesus, who were the ones most qualified to know whether or not it was really Jesus who had risen from the dead.

NO OTHER WAY TO ACCOUNT FOR THE BELIEF

The evidence for the resurrection rests not only upon the direct testimony of the New Testament, but upon the impossibility of accounting for the belief in the resurrection in any other way than on the ground of the *fact* of the resurrection. One of three things must have happened: the disciples lied; they were mistaken or deceived, and unintentionally deceived others; or they told the truth.

DID THEY LIE?

This was the charge made by the scribes and Pharisees who bribed the jailers to say that the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus. But if they stole away the body of Jesus and secreted it, and then floated the great fraud as to a resurrection, what could have been their motive? It was a lie which would have got them nothing with God or with man. They had not been able to prevent the crucifixion of Christ; how then could they hope to found a Church by lying about his resurrection? The only motive for preaching the resurrection was the belief that it was true. The character of these writers as reflected in their narratives is entirely out of keeping with that of men who are floating a deliberate falsehood. Their abiding influence, their vast enthusiasm, their not loving their own lives unto the death, their heroic achievements, and their glorious martyrdom do not fit in with the interpretation that they were infamous and colossal impostors and deceivers.

HALLUCINATION

According to this explanation, the disciples did not actually see Jesus risen from the grave, but merely *thought* that they had seen him. We are told that Mary of Magdala, for example, took Christ to be the gardener, but that the more likely thing is that she took the gardener to be Christ.

In the uncertain light of the early morning, and distracted with their grief, the friends of Jesus were not sure what they had seen and heard. They wished that Jesus were alive. They found it hard to believe that he was dead. Their wish was the father to their thought. Their grief created their visions, and their visions created the belief. Thus the legend arose; grief gave it wings. So Renan concludes his life of Jesus: "Had this body been taken away, or did enthusiasm, always credulous, create afterwards the narratives by which it was sought to establish faith in the resurrection? In the absence of opposing documents this can never be ascertained. Let us say, however, that the strong imagination of Mary Magdalene played an important part in the circumstance. Divine power of love! Sacred moments, in which the passion of one possessed gave to the world a resuscitated God!"

Beautiful rhetoric on the part of Renan; but a theory which will not bear investigation. Both the women to whom Jesus appeared and the disciples had to be slowly brought to believe that he was risen. All were unwilling and slow of heart, instead of being ready to mistake any feeling or any apparition for Christ. The women brought spices to embalm a corpse, not to salute the risen Lord. If these recorded appearances in the four Gospels are just hallucinations, why so many hallucinations, to so many different types of persons

and during so long a period as forty days? "Collective hallucinations are impossible." The disciples were not credulous, gullible men, ready to swallow down any tale or legend. When they first heard rumors of the resurrection, they dismissed them as "idle tales," and Jesus had to rebuke them for being slow of heart to believe what he himself had foretold and what had been predicted in the Gospels.

THAT CHRIST WAS NOT DEAD

Some time ago a popular novel revived this old idea that Christ did not expire on the cross, and that he was only in a swoon or state of coma, and that in the cool grotto of Joseph of Arimathea he revived and, escaping from the inclosure, went back to the city. This is contrary, first of all, to the only narratives we have of the resurrection, and which tell us that when the soldiers, according to custom, came to break the legs of Jesus, He was already dead. But one of them, just to amuse himself, took his spear and thrust it into His side. That alone would have produced mortality. Moreover, Pilate, before he set the guard at the tomb, secured from the rulers a certificate of death, and those rulers were the ones of all others most interested in having Christ actually expire. But suppose He had survived the agony of the cross and the process of embalming. How could He have gotten out of the tomb? How roll the

stone away? And if He had been able to do this, and had found His way to the disciples, and was nursed back to life, is it possible to think of such a Jesus inspiring His disciples with heroic faith and courage and making them believe that He was the Son of God?

WHERE IS THE BODY?

Luke tells us that they entered in and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. No one has ever found it. The grave of Jesus is still without a tenant. If not a resurrection, then what happened to the body of Jesus? Friend and foe alike agree that the grave was empty. Did the Jews steal it away, fearing that, as their leaders said, the disciples would spread a false report that Jesus had risen? But how could they have evaded the guard set by Pilate? and if they had been able to do that, and were in possession of the body of Jesus, certainly they would have produced it to prove that the apostles were liars and impostors when they claimed that He was risen. Nor is it conceivable that the disciples, to gain credence for a false resurrection, stole the body of Jesus, and with that body in their keeping went abroad to proclaim a colossal lie, and that out of that work of fraud and imposture arose Christian history. If it is preposterous to think that the beneficent stream of Christian history issued from a foul fountain of fraud, or that the

men who in the four Gospels give us the marvelous picture of Jesus of Nazareth are men who deliberately lie and deceive. That Christianity should have arisen out of a deliberate fraud, would be the greatest of all miracles, and supplies an answer to the demand of Strauss in his life of Christ that such a miracle as the resurrection "must be proved by the evidence in such a manner that the untruth of such evidence would be more difficult to conceive than the reality of which it was intended to prove." Only one theory accounts for the empty grave, and the conviction that Christ had risen, and that is the theory of the Gospels, of the Apostles, of the Church throughout the ages, that Christ rose again from the dead the third day.

IF HE HAD NOT RISEN

Some years ago a popular English novelist wrote a book called "When It Was Dark." The story centers about the efforts of a wealthy unbeliever to discredit Christianity. He attacks it at its very citadel, the resurrection, for he sees that if he can discredit the resurrection he discredits Christianity. He hires venal archeologists to "fake" a discovery of the body of Jesus in some tomb in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, with an ancient inscription testifying that the owner of this tomb stole the body of Jesus and hid it in that place. The novel then tries to de-

scribe the effect of such a discovery upon the Christian world and upon civilization in general. In powerful passages he shows how gradually the Christian Church crumbles and collapses, how men and women go back to lust, cruelty, and animalism, and how the flame of hope dies out in every heart.

All this was said centuries ago by St. Paul, who knew best the truth and the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus: "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain; and your faith also is vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God. If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain. Ye are yet in your sin. Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this world only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

No one got more out of Christ in this life than did St. Paul. No one lived more courageously, more heroically than St. Paul. Yet his verdict is that if Christ is not risen, all is vain. If Christ is not risen, the Bible is false, the Christian Church is a colossal fraud. Our beloved dead are forever dead, and never shall we see them or hear their voices again. We have no hope for the future, for a to-morrow after the night of death; and if this life is all, we might as well eat, drink, and be merry. But our merriment is the merriment of those who laugh and dance and drink upon the brink of a grave.

VI

HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN

WHERE is Christ now? One man might say, Christ is in His grave, like all other men who have lived their day. The Syrian stars to-night will look down upon His nameless tomb. Another answer might be that Christ is still on the earth. A third answer, the answer of the Scriptures and of the Christian Church, is that forty days after His resurrection Jesus ascended into heaven and now sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

When we say He sits at the right hand of God, it is not necessary to try to envisage an actual throne upon which are seated the three Persons of the Trinity. As we shall in a moment try to show, heaven is both a place and a state, and Christ has His spiritual place to-day. But the expression used so frequently in the New Testament, "sitting at the right hand of God," for us means that Christ, who became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, has taken with Him into the unseen world of glory the body which He inhabited and in which He was raised from the dead, and in which He will come again; for the angel said to the wondering disciples on the day of the ascension, "This *same* Jesus shall so come in like

manner as ye have seen him go." A world of meaning is poured into that one word, *same.*

WHY JESUS REMAINED FORTY DAYS AFTER HIS RESURRECTION

During the forty days after His resurrection, Jesus remained near or with His disciples, appearing unto them, now as they have let down their nets in the fishing boats, as the mists began to lift from the face of the Sea of Galilee, now as they are met together on the first day, the doors being shut for fear of the Jews, and now as they walk into the country, and again under different circumstances and in different places.

There were two reasons why Jesus waited for forty days ere He bade the earth and His disciples a final farewell. The first reason was evidently that He might convince them beyond all peradventure of a doubt that He had actually risen from the dead; for, without such conviction as to a bodily resurrection of Jesus, there would have been no Church and no Christianity. Suppose that Jesus had appeared to just one person, or upon just one occasion. Then there might have been more ground for the claim that the resurrection was just a hallucination or an inner vision created by longing hearts. But the many appearances, under so many different circumstances and in so many different places, established the resurrection so firmly that to deny it

is to deny that there is such a thing as history and a credible witness to fact. Thus when Luke wrote his second book, the Book of Acts, and referred to the resurrection of Jesus, he could say that Jesus showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them—that is, the disciples—forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

The second reason for this delay of forty days between the resurrection and the ascension was evidently that He might give them instruction in the doctrines they were to proclaim to the world. This is so declared by Luke when he says that Jesus spoke during these forty days of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. When we turn from the pages of the Gospels to the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles, we may well wonder how it was that the apostles got so quickly that full comprehension of the message they were to give to the world. The ideas of the gospel of redemption are all found in outline or germ form in the sayings of Jesus before His crucifixion. But it will be evident to the most cursory reader of the New Testament that after the ascension of Jesus the apostles have a very definite gospel and message to give to the world. Where did they get it? Undoubtedly the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit was a chief means of their knowledge, for Christ said after He was gone the Holy Spirit would come and lead them into

all truth. But it is plain, too, that the disciples were carefully instructed by Jesus during the forty days between His resurrection and ascension. In one Gospel, that of Luke, we are told that, beginning at Moses and the prophets, Jesus interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself, and especially His death, and remission of sin through His death. In the sermon Peter preached to Cornelius, the Roman centurion, he gave a summary of Christian doctrine as it was preached and established in the world by the apostles. This message was, in brief, Jesus, the One who fulfilled prophecy, the One through whom we have the remission of sin, and the coming Judge of all the earth. Peter adds that Jesus gave them this message about Himself *after* His resurrection. These forty days, therefore, were the days in which Christian theology arose in its true and divine form, not out of the imagination of men, but from the command of Jesus Himself.

WHY HE ASCENDED

When these great ends, conviction as to the resurrection and instruction as to the meaning of His death on the cross, had been fulfilled, it was no longer expedient for Jesus to remain upon earth. It was expedient for the Church, for the disciples, as He himself had said, that He go from them. Suppose that Jesus had remained.

Where would He have remained? In Jerusalem? Capernaum? Athens? Rome? And under what circumstances would He have lived upon the earth? No, the natural and necessary step was His disappearance and ascension. He led them out as far as to Bethany, says Luke; in Acts he calls the place the Mount called Olivet, at the foot of which lay the village of Bethany. Gethsemane also was on the Mount of Olives; and perhaps where our Lord drank the bitter cup of His humiliation and felt most keenly the weight of the world's woe and shame—there He ascended to the glory which He had forsaken at the right hand of God. He led them out as far as to Bethany and lifted up his hands and blessed them. There suddenly, in the midst of an easy and natural intercourse, and with his hands lifted in the familiar gesture of benediction, something new and strange happened, and Christ vanished out of their sight, save for the appearance to Saul of Tarsus, not to be seen again on this earth, until he shall come in glory and in judgment.

There comes a day of inevitable separation between even the closest of friends. We go with them, as it were, as far as Bethany; they ask us to sit by their side and hold their hand and not leave them as they go over the mysterious border between this life and that life, and then suddenly there comes a great change. The eye was looking into our eye, and the hand was grasping

our hand; the voice articulating some word of affection or fond remembrance; and then, in a moment, our friend is gone. A cloud received him out of our sight. Jesus, too, was taken from his disciples, and a cloud received him out of their sight.

HEAVEN IS A PLACE

Three great truths are presented to us by the fact of the ascension of Jesus. First, that heaven must be a place as well as a state; second, that the great work of Christ in heaven is to make intercession for his believers and his Church; and, third, that Christ in heaven, at the right hand of God, is now on the throne of all power and all dominion.

It is cheap and easy to say, as we sometimes hear it said, that heaven is no more above us than it is under us, and that the idea of an ascension on the part of Jesus, while easy for men who had the static and mechanical thought of the heavens, is impossible for us to-day who know that what we point to-night among the shining stars to-morrow will be under our feet.

The visible and material world, which we are tempted to regard as being the only universe, is but a temporary thing, a sort of staging and expression of the original immaterial, invisible, and spiritual universe. The prophets, both of revelation and of science, seem to foretell the dissolu-

tion and disappearance of the present visible world. As Isaiah phrased it, "All the host of heaven shall be dissolved and the heaven shall be rolled together as a scroll." Or, as St. Peter said, "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." This was the idea to which Shakespeare gave such beautiful phrasing in "The Tempest."

> "The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve;
> And like this unsubstantial pageant, faded,
> Leave not a wreck behind."

There is a natural world, and there is a spiritual world; just as Paul said, "There is a natural body and a spiritual body." He declares not merely that the spirit survives the shock of death and its separation from the body, but that in the invisible world man has a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. If this is true, then we shall have little difficulty in conceiving that there is also a natural world and a spiritual world; a natural world which is the home of the natural body; a spiritual world which is the home of the spiritual body. More and more, men are becoming cautious about dogmatizing concerning that which lies beyond the ken of experience and scientific investigation.

Certainly our little knowledge about our present universe would not lead us to conclude that this is the only world or the only kind of a world. The Scriptures do not locate or describe heaven. But when Jesus ascended into heaven, to the right hand of God, he passed through into a world that is just as real as this world in which we live today; and there now he reigns with his hand upon the scepter of the universe.

CHRIST AND HIS INTERCESSION

What, may we ask, is the work and office of Christ at this present time and in that heavenly world to which he has gone? Here again the Scriptures leave us in no doubt. Christ now performs the work of intercession for his Church and his disciples. This is unmistakably declared in such passages as the following: "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. 8: 34.) "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7: 25.) "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (John 2: 1.)

The work of atonement was finished when Christ cried out on the cross, "It is finished," and gave up the ghost. That great work that had to

be done, ere man could be reconciled to God, had been accomplished; but in his resurrection and in his ascension Christ still carries on his work as a Mediator and a Redeemer by interceding for his people and applying to them the benefits of his death.

On a close August day in Florence, after visiting the great Duomo, where Savonarola thundered against the iniquities of the city, and the beautiful St. John's Church, with its marvelous gateway, I sought out a Protestant place of worship. It was an evangelical church of no great dimensions in an obscure part of the city. The service was one familiar to all Protestants and, although I did not understand much that the man was saying, yet the preacher spoke in simple earnestness to his people. On the wall over his head there were written the words of St. John: "There is one God and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." However this idea may be neglected in popular teaching and preaching and however lost sight of in popular Christianity to-day, no one can read the New Testament without having presented to him the fact that the kingdom of God is a kingdom of redemption and of mediation, and that the Mediator, the one who stands between man and God and reconciles man to God and God to man, is the eternal God-man, Christ Jesus. This work

of mediation and reconciliation he carries on in his present state in heaven.

One whole book of the Bible, the Epistle to the Hebrews, is devoted to this idea of the priestly work of Christ. The Hebrew Christians were tempted to fall away from Christianity and go back to their temple and altar service because they felt that Christianity had no true temple, no altar, and no priest. But the writer of the epistle, drawing upon the Old Testament dispensation and ritual, tried to show to his readers that the Christian, after all, has the only high priest, the only sacrifice, the only abiding altar. He reminds his readers of the solemn service in the Old Testament times on the day of Atonement, when the priest, with the people waiting in the outer court, having offered the sacrifice, unattended and in silence, passed within the sacred shrine or veil and sprinkled the blood of the atonement upon the mercy seat. This was a service which had to be repeated every year, and as one high priest passed away from the earth another had to take his place. "But Jesus," he says, "is the eternal Priest and, having gone within the veil, he ever lives to make intercession for his people."

HIS DEATH, THE GROUND FOR INTERCESSION

We need not think of Jesus as vocally pleading to God the Father to show mercy to those who have believed on him, but rather that in heaven

Jesus, in his risen and exalted humanity, presents himself and his death as the ground and the way whereby God can show mercy to the sinner. All this will mean nothing to those within the Church or without the Church who take light views of sin. But let it be remembered that neither Christ, his apostles, the prophets, nor the Scriptures anywhere take such a view of sin. The frequency of sin in no way takes away from its terrible tragedy. In every sin, there is a whole universe of possible evil. It is because sin is so serious that this work of redemption, mediation, and intercession is carried on by Christ on our behalf to-day:

"Five bleeding wounds he bears
Received on Calvary.
They pour effectual prayers;
They strongly speak to me.
Forgive! Forgive! they ever cry,
Nor let that ransomed sinner die."

There is an old story of how the celebrated Greek poet, Æschylus, was about to be sentenced and banished by the citizens of Athens. But his brother, who had lost an arm at the battle of Salamis, appeared at the Tribunal and displayed his wounds as a reason why the citizens should show mercy to Æschylus. Upon that ground, and with that appeal, the poet was set free. This is but a poor illustration of how the wounds of Christ, his death upon the cross, are forever with

God the ground of our forgiveness and his mercy. That is what we mean every time we conclude our prayers, in Church or in private, by saying, "For Christ's sake. Amen." We ask God to answer our prayers and forgive our sins, for Christ's sake—that is, not merely for the sake of who Christ was, but *what* Christ *did* upon the cross.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO THOSE WHO HAVE SINNED

No one had more severe things to say about sin than St. John, the apostle of love, and no one demanded of the believers more by way of obedience and Christian living than did he. Yet it is John who, along with the other New Testament writers, holds out for the man who has sinned this great hope of Christ's intercession. He says, "If any man sin [that is, of those who have believed upon Jesus already and commenced to follow him], we have an advocate with the Father, even Christ the righteous." This fact ought to be of great encouragement to all believers. If the commission of a sin is followed by bitterness and remorse, how much more so is this true in the case of one who has repented of past sins, has confessed Christ as his Master, and has commenced to follow him. When such a man has been overtaken by a fault, has fallen into sin, he is very apt to become discouraged and to think that for him it is useless to make any further efforts in

the way of Christian living. But he is told that he is to remember that there is one at the right hand of God who maketh intercession for him. Though he have lost faith in himself, though his best and closest friends hold out no hope for him, he is to remember that Jesus has not forgotten him, that he has not delivered him to his foes, that he still thinks enough of him to pray for him.

PETER AND THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST

In the story of the last night of our Lord, we have a beautiful, prophetic example of how Christ intercedes for his friends. He told Peter, who had been boasting about his fidelity and courage, that he would that night thrice deny that he had ever known him. Satan, he said, would try to sift him as wheat that he might have him. "But," said Jesus, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." It was the recollection of that prayer which saved Peter on that awful night when he denied his Lord and went out into the darkness and wept bitterly. He must have remembered in the anguish of his self-reproach and humiliation and shame that Jesus had prayed for him, that under these very circumstances, having fallen into this very sin, he would repent of it and not lose or abandon his faith. So every man to-day who wounds Christ, whom he really loves, and denies him as Peter denied him, however his sin may look to his friends or to himself, may have

the deep satisfaction of knowing that Jesus prays for him that his faith shall not fail.

THE EVER-LIVING INTERCEDER

When the good and the great come to die and pass out of mortal sight, they leave behind them their example, their influence. The painter's genius or the sculptured effigy will preserve for future generations their features and countenance, and to-day even the sound of their voice can be handed down to succeeding generations. Yet as living, speaking, acting persons they have vanished. That is true even of the nearest and the dearest. Well do I remember the Sabbath eight years ago, when I went into my pulpit and realized for the first time that my mother's prayers had not preceded me to that place to make intercession for me and for God's blessing upon my preaching. If it is granted unto our departed friends to do so, I have no doubt that in heaven that intercession is continued. But this we know about the Lord Jesus Christ, that death did not take from, but rather added to, the power of his blessing and his intercession. "He," said the apostle, in contrast with all others, "ever liveth to make intercession for us."

IN THE TRIALS OF LIFE

In all our difficulties and trials and sufferings, it is a real comfort to think that there are those

who are deeply, vitally interested in us and who feel for us when we suffer pain or sorrow of soul or of body. It is also a comfort to know that, even when we have done wrong, there are those who are deeply sorry and who are still interested in us and have faith in us. How much more, then, is it a comfort to know that Christ is One who takes such an interest in us and makes a plea on our behalf. The New Testament lays the greatest emphasis upon this side of the work of Jesus, his sympathy and his help. It tells us that there is no place where earth's sorrows are more felt than up in heaven; and because we have this great High Priest who has passed into the heavens, we are to come boldly in the time of our need unto the throne of mercy to find grace to help.

The last great trial to which man is subjected is death. What the intercession of Jesus means at that time we learn from the last moments of the first of the martyrs, Stephen. While the mob cursed him and stoned him, Stephen looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God and said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." This he followed with his beautiful prayer for the forgiveness of his foes, the prayer which Augustine, and after him, Luther, thought was the means of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, at whose feet the murderers of Stephen had laid

their garments: "He kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he said this, he fell asleep."

JESUS ON THE THRONE

The ascension of Jesus tells us finally that he is on the throne of the universe. The resurrection proved that he was still alive. The ascension proved that all power and dominion are in his hands. Because Christ is on the throne, the believer can wait patiently for the end. Because Christ is on the throne and has given the command to his Church, the Church with all confidence and courage can go to all the world to preach the everlasting gospel.

VII

THENCE HE SHALL COME

When the Christians of the early Church wrote to one another or met one another on the street, their word of greeting was "Maranatha"—the Lord is at hand. They thought he would surely come in their own day and generation. But now that "at hand" has been stretched and expanded into more than nineteen centuries.

The great period of time which has elapsed since the words of Christ and his apostles about his second coming were spoken has cast something of a shadow over this mighty conviction which was the master light of all the seeing of the first Christians. This is not strange. The strange thing is that the promise has never been forgotten; the great hope has never faded away from the horizon of man's thought and faith. The great empire which ruled the world when Christ spoke these words has long since sunk beneath the sea of oblivion, and after it, kingdom after kingdom, empire after empire, nation after nation has gone down into its grave; but still the Church of Christ exists, and still the Church waits for her bridegroom, and confesses, "Thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead."

"O where are kings and empires now
Of old that went and came?
But, Lord, thy Church is praying yet,
A thousand years the same."

A PUZZLING PARADOX

The second advent of Christ is the first of the great doctrines we have been discussing which belongs to the future. Nevertheless it is a foundation fact. As Henry Liddon once put it when preaching in St. Paul's: "If Christ is not coming back in glory, then let us turn the key in the west door of this cathedral."

Although the first advent of Christ in the incarnation had been foretold by the prophets for ages, when the great event actually took place, the majority of men had an altogether wrong conception of what it was to be and how it was to be. Perhaps it will be the same with the second advent of Christ. One of the difficulties about the predictions of this great event is the paradox of immediacy and remoteness—that is, the event is declared to be both near and far off. Christ said that just as the putting forth of the leaves of the fig tree let men know that summer was at hand, so the coming to pass of some of the things which he had been discussing would let them know that the kingdom of God was "nigh at hand."

But side by side with these passages which speak of the immediacy and imminency of his coming there are those which seem to defer it far into

the future. The great parable of the nobleman and the pounds Christ introduced by saying, "Because *they thought* that the kingdom of God should immediately appear." The nobleman goes into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. Before going, he called his ten servants and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, "Occupy till I come." The inference is that it will be a long time before the return of Christ.

The same paradox confronts us in the teachings of Paul. In many places he speaks as if the judge were at the gate. "Maranatha"—The Lord is at hand—is his frequent greeting. On the other hand, Paul commences one of his earliest letters by telling his readers not to be shaken in their minds or troubled in spirit by any word or letter from him as if the day of Christ were at hand. The only conclusion to be drawn from this, and many other enigmas in connection with the predictions of the second advent of Christ, is that the times and seasons are hid by God in order that we might always watch and pray, and thus be ready for his coming. As St. Augustine well expressed it: "The last day is hid that all days might be observed." So far as time is concerned the conclusion of the whole matter is this: "Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

AN ANCIENT AND UNIVERSAL BELIEF

It matters not how dimly the lamp of this hope of Christ's coming has burned at times, the winds of unbelief and worldliness have never been able to extinguish it. Every great expression of Christian faith and hope mentions this last great act in the drama of redemption. The Apostles' Creed, at whatever time it arose in its present form, truly expresses an apostolic belief when it says: "Thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead." Every time we repeat together the Lord's Prayer, we say, "Thy kingdom come," and we know his kingdom cannot come until the King himself comes. Every time we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we salute afar off, or near at hand, the coming of Christ; "For," said St. Paul in his record of the institution of the Lord's Supper, "as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death *till he come.*" When the last words are spoken over the grave of the believer, they are the words of hope and of reunion founded upon a belief in the second coming of Christ: "Looking for the resurrection of the body and the life of the world to come through our Lord Jesus Christ, at whose appearing in glorious majesty the earth and the sea shall give up her dead, and the mortal bodies of those that sleep shall be changed and made like unto his own glorious body."

THE TEACHING OF CHRIST

No one who believes that Jesus was the Son of God and accepts him as the supreme and infallible authority, can doubt that Christ will come to judge the quick and the dead. Over and over again he refers to this great event, when he will come in glory with his angels; how the coming will be visible to all, like lightning coming out of the east and shining to the west; how it is unpredictable and will be unexpected, overtaking humanity as the deluge did in the days of Noah. His great parables, such as the Wise and Foolish Virgins, the Talents, the Husbandman, the Heir and the Lord of the Vineyard, and the Pounds, although generally treated by preachers only as to their valuable by-products, have for their one chief lesson the unexpectedness, the suddenness, the blessings, and the judgments of Christ's coming again. In his farewell address, Christ comforted his disciples, not merely with the promise that he would send the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, but that he himself would come unto them. After the resurrection, one of his last messages dealt with this subject. When answering the curiosity of Peter as to the fate of John, Jesus said, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me." If Christ is not coming again, then his moral authority is destroyed, and we cannot worship him as God, for if he is not coming he must have been

either an ignorant and self-deceived man or, as the scribes and Pharisees described him—"that deceiver," the colossal deceiver and impostor of history.

THE APOSTLES TEACH IT

The New Testament and Christian history are but the echo of the promise given by the angels at the ascension, that the *same* Jesus whom they had seen taken from them into heaven would so come in like manner as they had seen him go. Peter calls this future event the blessed hope of the Church and likens it to the dawning of the day, when the day-star arises in the heart of believers. He bids the persecuted disciples to endure bravely their suffering, for when the Chief Shepherd shall appear they shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. St. John, looking forward to the great event, declares that the hope of Christ's coming purifies the life of every man who receives it, and that when he comes we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. He brings the New Testament to a close in the Book of Revelation with the fervent prayer, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." St. James tells the persecuted believers of his day to be patient and to establish their hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh, and the Judge is at the door. As for Paul, this expectation of the coming of Christ, sounding like the surge of the sea, is the deep

undertone of all his teachings and all his preaching.

A MEANINGLESS BOOK

The references to the second advent of Christ are so numerous in the New Testament that if one were to delete from its pages all these passages one would have left a strange-looking and, in many places, altogether unintelligible book, for it would so abound in gaps and *lacunæ* as to leave the reader all at sea concerning the meaning. The driving power and energy of the early Church was this belief, held so ardently by those who constituted the early Church, that Christ would return from the invisible world to establish his kingdom, overthrow all wickedness, banish forever pain, sin, and sorrow, and reign with his saints in glory.

REASON AND COMMON SENSE

The doctrine of the return of Christ is not only a teaching of Scripture, it is the inference of reason and common sense. An end of things is just as natural, logical, inevitable as a beginning. "Then cometh the end," meets the demands of our reason, just as, "In the beginning." The alternative is an endless cycle, a perpetual recurrence of what we now see, the ebb and flow of good and evil; light and darkness ever contending over the body of humanity. Not only do we believe that there will be an end to the human order, but

the right kind of an end, one which shall vindicate faith, overthrow dignity, and establish forever and universally the kingdom of righteousness and of peace. This expectation is firmly fixed in the mind of man. In spite of all his sufferings, his passions, and his follies, man has seen through his tears, shining in the distance, the golden turrets of the ideal commonwealth, the Holy City of God.

BUT HOW WILL THIS END COME?

If we believe in a great end for the world and mankind, the question arises, How will this great goal be attained? It is when we come to consider this that we understand the appropriateness and the necessity of the advent of Christ. Those who are under the spell of universal and invincible progress, regardless of what men and nations do, believe that ultimately the world will develop and evolve into perfection. But granting that there will be great progress in the future, as there has been in the past, does anyone really think that knowledge, science, progress can bring in a perfect order for man? Will science ever stop men from sinning? Will knowledge ever stop men from dying? Will progress ever heal the broken heart or wipe away all tears from the eyes of man? To ask these questions is to answer them.

MORE THAN PRESENT FORCES NEEDED

Others, again, expect that the goal of a perfect

humanity will be attained through the development and expansion of the Christian Church as it is now established in the world. It is conceivable that evil might be banished from the world by the preaching of the gospel, and slow, gradual, but certain overcoming of iniquity among men. This end might also be attained by a final and judical separation and judgment. We judge from the words of Christ that the plan of God involves, not merely the work and influence of the Christian Church and Christian forces in the present age and among men, but a last great act of divine intervention, when Christ shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

Christ's parable of the wheat and the tares is brief but profound. In it we have his philosophy of history. When the servants of the husbandman ask him if they shall root out the tares which are springing up with the wheat, and which had been sown there by an enemy, he said, "No, let them grow together until the harvest." Then will come the separation. Here Christ teaches not only a growth and development of the good, but a development of the evil, the wheat and the tares growing together. The wheat, because it grows, does not uproot or destroy the tares; neither do the tares completely choke the wheat. They grow *together* until the harvest. Then comes the separation and the judgment. Neither the wheat nor the tares can harvest themselves.

The wheat cannot transport itself into the barn, nor can the tares transport themselves into the flame. Thus reason, as well as revelation, points to a last great act and a winding up of the affairs of the human race. What is required is not a mere reformation or development of the world order, but its complete supercession and the advent, as it were, upon the field of battle of the Captain of our salvation himself.

EVENTS BEFORE AND AFTER

As we have seen, the time and the season of the coming of Christ are purposely hid from us. Wherever we come upon a passage which seems to tell us that we shall know just when Christ will come, we must read that passage in the light of many others which tell us that we know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh, and that it will be sudden and unpredictable, as the flashing of the lightning out of the east unto the west.

But we are not attempting to be wise above what is written when we mention certain great events and changes which in the New Testament are associated with the advent of Christ. One is a widespread diffusion of the gospel; it is to be preached for a witness to Christ throughout the world. There is clearly foretold, also, a great change among the Jewish people; that, as some believe, *before,* or, as others believe, *after* his

coming, the Jews, as a nation, will accept Christ as the Messiah, and so, as Paul said, "all Israel shall be saved." Before he comes there will be wars and rumors of war and attendant convulsions in both the political and the physical world.

THE GREAT APOSTASY

Both Christ and his apostles intimate that before Christ comes there will be a great apostasy and falling away in the Church. St. Paul, in one of the earliest utterances in the New Testament on the subject of the second advent, warns the disturbed disciples of Thessalonica that Christ will not come until there has been a falling away and until the man of sin, Antichrist, has made his appearance and done his work. Here he seems to teach that the wickedness of the world is to come to a terrible climax in a human institution, perhaps a human personality.

IS THE TIME AT HAND?

It is only natural that men reading these predictions should wonder if in their own day and generation there are any signs of their fulfillment. Not a few who study the condition of the Church and of the world to-day are of the opinion that the world drama is approaching its climax. Among the things which they note, and which seem to fulfill the idea of a great falling away or apostasy, is the crumbling and the decline of great

Christian customs, such as the observance of the Lord's day and the worship of God in the family. Others point to the prevalence of a low conception of man's nature, that he is of the earth, earthy, just the product of æons of change in physical matter. This strange hypothesis fulfills Paul's idea of how God has given men over to "believe a lie." Humanity seems to-day to be fascinated with a base lie concerning its origin and its nature. Nor can one fail to observe an increasing alienation from the gospel and from the Church on the part of education and of the world of intellect. This alienation some try to disguise by saying that it is an alienation only from the Church, from organized Christianity, and not from Christ or his gospel. But none will be deceived by such a statement as that. The dean of one of our great universities withdrew from attendance at the preaching services in the chapel on Sunday on the ground that the men, all ministers of evangelical Churches, who were brought there to preach, studiously avoided the grand particularities of the gospel in speaking to the students. Anyone who reads the papers and the magazines of the day will see how the attack upon Christianity has moved beyond a mere questioning of the date of certain Old Testament or New Testament books, or the historicity of certain miracles, and now boldly questions the Scriptural and New Testament concep-

tion of God, and tells us that the first thing we must do is to get rid of the Christian idea of God.

All this is deeply significant and must be taken into the reckoning by one who studies the times in the light of the New Testament. But most striking of all is a present apostasy within the Christian Church itself. There is a general falling away from the cardinal truths of the gospel. Who can deny that this is so? The only way to escape from such a conviction is to say that the New Testament idea of Christianity is false, and that not until our day, with the development of centuries, and the enlightenment of science, have a few moderns and radicals discovered just who Christ was and what his message means. Paul, the great teacher and thinker of Christianity, said that the thing he declared *first of all,* not merely first in order, but first in importance, was that Christ died for our sins according to the gospel. If one shall take the religious page of the newspapers in any of our great cities and read the announced themes for the coming Sunday in the Christian pulpits of the city, one will see how far the Church has moved from Paul's idea as to what is cardinal and essential in Christian preaching.

BUT OTHER AGES HAVE BEEN WORSE

When we contemplate these changes and declensions within and without the Church, and are inclined to think that they are the premonitory

signs of Christ's advent, we must remember that there have been other ages when the Church was in a worse condition apparently and when in the world there were events which appeared to be indicative of the end of the age. The student of Church history will not forget the indifferentism and general abandonment of the cross by the Church in England in the eighteenth century. Nor will he forget the terrible chapters in the history of the Medieval Church, or in the history of the Church of the first five centuries. Then, too, men were convinced that the Judge was at the door. But still the Judge has not come; still the bridegroom tarries; nor yet has the lightning come out of the east and shone even unto the west.

THE PRACTICAL MEANING

The practical value of this doctrine that Christ will come again is, first of all, one of hope and inspiration for his Church in the world. It lets us know beyond the peradventure of a doubt that Christ's kingdom shall come, and that he shall have dominion, as the Psalmist said, from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth. One day, perhaps sooner than most of us are thinking, the Holy City of God shall come down and take the place of our world with its sin and sorrow and shame and death, and the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

For us as individual Christians, the teaching of Christ and his apostles about his final appearance on the earth is of a nature to inspire and purify our lives, ever teaching us to live as in his presence and to watch and to pray. So St. John wrote, "Everyone that hath this hope purifieth himself." The event is certain, but the date is uncertain. Therefore we must ever be ready, lest we be taken by surprise.

An unwritten saying of Christ preserved by Justin Martyr is an excellent summary of Christ's teaching as to the meaning of his return for each one of us: "In whatsoever employment I may surprise you, therein also will I judge you."

VIII

THE LAST JUDGMENT

One of the most beautiful and picturesque spots in America is Harper's Ferry, where the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers break through the mountains and mingle their waters in one broad stream. Standing on a flat, tilting rock, on what is now the West Virginia side of the Shenandoah River, one commands a noble view of that mountain country. Underneath, at the right, is the Shenandoah, with the Virginia mountains beyond it. Across the Potomac, to the left, the mountains of Maryland; and directly in front of one, the reënforced Potomac foams over the rocks until it is lost behind an island mountain in the distance.

It was on this tilting rock that Thomas Jefferson is said to have written his "Notes on Virginia." In those "Notes on Virginia" occurs his memorable prediction concerning slavery in America: "I tremble when I remember that God is just." Almost a century afterwards, when the whole nation had been drenched in blood by a war which was fought over the question of slavery, Abraham Lincoln in his Second Inaugural, speaking of the war then raging, said: "But if it shall continue until every drop of blood drawn

by the lash has been paid for with another drawn by the sword, and until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, then, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.' "

A UNIVERSAL INTUITION

That there is a God, a hereafter, and that God will judge, are three convictions which rise out of the moral constitution of man's nature. Man without immortality and with accountability would be only an animal. A God who could not judge would not be God.

No honest dealing with the teaching of Jesus as we have it recorded in the New Testament can evade the problem raised by that teaching as to a day of judgment. Always Christ seems to stand under the cope of the next world. Many of his great parables, whatever the interesting and helpful by-products which men have discovered in them, have for their principal thought the final revelation and separation of the Judgment Day. All humanity, all history, according to history, is moving forward toward the day of separation. The wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest.

But the idea of a future judgment was not invented by Christianity. Like immortality, it is

brought to light in the gospel. The idea itself is one which belongs to mankind. In Egypt the body of a dead man was presented before the forty-two judges on the eastern shore of the Lake of Acherusia, where strict inquiry was made into his conduct and character. In the next life the processes of judgment were continued and finished in the terrible Hall of the Two Truths, or Double Justice, where the soul was tried. If condemned, it was scourged back to the earth to live again in the form of some vile beast. If justified, it was permitted to join the sun god in his joyful pursuits on the banks of the heavenly Nile. One of the most striking of the ancient conceptions of the judgment is the story of the trance of Erus, as related in Plato's Republic. Erus had been desperately wounded in battle and left for dead on the field. When men came to bury the dead, finding the body of Erus fresh and uncorrupted, they carried it to his home and prepared it for burial there. On the twelfth day after the battle, as he lay on his funeral pyre, Erus revived and related what he had seen in the other world. He told how, together with a never-ceasing stream of souls from this world, he had appeared at a place on the borders of the earth where the judges had set up their throne. There the stream of souls coming from the earth was divided into two companies—the just taking the road to the right leading up to heaven, the unjust the road to the

left leading downward to the earth and bearing placards declaring their sins and transgressions. When Erus appeared before the tribunal, the judges told him that he must go back to the earth and be a witness to all that which took place after death and the judgment.

Illustrations like these are sufficient to show that the idea of judgment is one of the universal intuitions of mankind. When the barbarians first saw the viper hanging on the apostle's arm, after the shipwreck at Malta, they cried out: "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped by the sea, yet justice suffereth not to live." They were mistaken as to their classification of St. Paul, but not mistaken as to their conviction concerning the great moral law which everywhere vibrates in the universe.

A FUTURE JUDGMENT

The last judgment is a future, a special act of God's justice. It is not to be confused with, or identified with, the righteous judgments of God in this world. It is a deep and true saying of Schelling that the "history of the world is the judgment of the world." God judges the world, as the psalmist said, by terrible things in righteousness. In the shadow of every great war or national calamity we can discern the august figure of the Judge himself. Men and nations suffer retribution for their sins in this life. Even if we

had no revelation as to a last judgment and a future retribution, still we should have no occasion to revise the solemn declaration, "The way of the transgressor is hard."

But, because there are judgments in this world, it would be foolish to conclude that these are the only judgments. The very intensity and severity of punishment here in this world ought to serve to make men more thoughtful about the judgments and punishments of the world to come. It would be a mistake to say that all men are punished in this life in proportion to their transgressions. One of the chief elements of the final judgment as taught by Christ in the New Testament is revelation and exposure. None would say that all transgressors in this life suffer exposure and revelation. A man may even escape the accusation and punishment of his own conscience, after that conscience has ceased to function and has become seared as with a red-hot iron. The author of those beautiful lines, "The Burial of Sir John Moore," Charles Wolfe, was also a preacher of great ability, and on this subject of the last judgment he has a true and searching utterance to this effect; that the judgments of God fall often enough to let us know that God judges, but seldom enough to let us know that his judgments are not confined to this world. Or, as St. Augustine put it, "If no sins were punished in this world, we would conclude that there was no future judg-

ment." The judgments which fall upon men in this life have a disciplinary and admonitory effect. Judgments here serve the end of repentance and reformation; but that is quite distinct from the purpose of the last judgment as declared by Christ and his apostles, which is to expose the wicked, separate them from the good, and finally vindicate the law of God. The sentence of the last judgment is irrevocable.

THE TIME OF THE JUDGMENT

Like other great events at the end of the world with which the judgment is associated in the Scriptures, the time of it is not known. The day is fixed and appointed by God. But that day and hour no man knoweth. The last judgment, however close the connection, will certainly follow the advent of Christ and the resurrection of the dead. But since that great event, the advent of Christ, although certain as to fact, is uncertain as to the time and season, it follows that the day of judgment is also unknown. But that there is to be a day of judgment, a final winding up of the jurisprudence of the human race—as to that there can be no doubt, if we believe in Christ and accept his teachings. Christ's repeated references to the last judgment reached their grand climax in the judgment scene, "when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one

from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." Everywhere the apostles echo this deep note of judgment. In his speech to the philosophers on Mars' Hill, St. Paul said: "He hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." And St. John in his great vision of the future said: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; . . . and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." Yes, all Scripture bears testimony to what St. Paul over and over again echoes, that we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God and give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil.

CHRIST TO BE THE JUDGE

The visitor to the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican at Rome has looked with awe and wonder upon those masterpieces of Michelangelo. Along the two walls, at the top, are the wonderful paintings of the prophets and the patriarchs, the apostles and the sibyls. In the center over one's head is the most beautiful panel of all, the Creation of Man. But against the wall at the end of the chapel is the terrific scene of the Last Judgment. There you can see the stern Judge upon his throne, repulsing from him the wicked and the

unbelievers, who are plunged into the lake of fire beneath, where the devils await them to torment them. It is difficult at first to reconcile that conception of Jesus with the Christ whom we know in the New Testament. Nevertheless, we must remember that in his earthly ministry Jesus does not appear as the Judge. We behold him as the Incarnate Son of God; we follow him as the gentle Physican and Teacher of truth, the compassionate worker of miracles; we behold him as the Eternal Sacrifice for sin upon the cross; we see him in the mystery of his resurrection, and bid him farewell as he ascends into heaven. But as a Judge, Christ belongs to the future. He distinctly disavowed judgment during his ministry upon earth. At the same time, he said that the Father had committed all judgment into his hands. The Man whom he hath ordained to judge the world, as Paul put it, is Christ, and it was Christ who said: "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the grave shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that they have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

CHRIST JUSTIFIED TO JUDGE

There is something at once inexpressibly tender and comforting in this truth that Christ is to be our Judge. He is qualified to be our Judge be-

cause he knows our nature. He was made in all things like unto his brethren. He was tempted in all points like as we are, and our very High Priest, who is also our Great Judge, is touched with a feeling for our infirmities. He knows human nature. Christ will make no mistake.

"Who made the heart, 'tis he alone
Decidedly can try us;
He knows each chord its various note,
Each string its various bias."

There is also something inexpressibly solemn in the thought that it is Christ who will be our Judge. He who stood condemned at the bar of Pilate shall one day sit enthroned at the seat of universal judgment. He who is mercy and long-suffering is the One who will judge the secrets of our hearts and determine our destiny. His sentence will be the sentence of perfect justice and of perfect mercy. Every soul whom he condemns will acquiesce in that condemnation.

THE SUBJECT OF THE JUDGMENT

At the last great day men and angels will be judged. Man sinned, and an atonement has been provided for him. The angels fell, and, so far as we know, an atonement has not been provided for them, perhaps because of their greater strength and greater opportunity. This future judgment upon angels is frequently referred to in the Scriptures. When Christ was casting out the demons,

they cried out to him, recognizing his right to judgment at the last day, but protesting against his present disturbance of them, "Art thou come hither to torment us before our time?" St. Peter speaks of fallen angels as "delivered in chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment." Imagination tries to follow these angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation as they come forward into the judgment of the last great day. In the powerful language of the eloquent Samuel Davies, the great Colonial preacher and president of Princeton, "What horribly majestic figures will these be! and what a dreadful appearance will they make at the bar! angels and archangels, thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers blasted, stripped of their primeval glories and lying in ruins, yet majestic even in ruins, gigantic forms of terror and depravity; great though degraded, horribly illustrious, angels fallen, gods undeified and deposed."

But however it may fare with the fallen angels, what we are plainly told is that we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. "I saw the dead, the small and the great, stand before God." What a spectacle that will be! In thinking of it we must avoid two extremes—the extreme of likening it to an earthly assize, and the extreme of making it only a figure of speech. "You are fond of spectacle," cried the stern Tertullian;

"except the greatest of all spectacles, the last and eternal judgment of the universe." Imagination reels before the contemplation of that great assemblage of mankind, when all the distinctions of rank shall be obliterated, for the small and the great shall be there; and when all differences of race and time shall disappear, and Adam and Noah shall be the contemporaries of the last men. But if the imagination has difficulty in picturing the last great assize, reason has no difficulty in accepting the fact of that final judgment.

THE GROUND AND STANDARD OF THE JUDGMENT

The ground of the judgment will be human conduct in this life. "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of the deeds done in the body." In the body man sinned, and in the body—that is, this form of his existence, body and spirit—he shall be judged. The soul which hoped that it was forever done with the body will tremble to behold its old companion and the partner and instrument of its sin. The soul might denounce the body through which and in which it had sinned; and the body, on the other hand, might recriminate against the soul, because the soul had prostituted the body to base purposes and uses, when it might have made it the agent and instrumentality of purity, virtue, and truth. We see, then, the deep truth which

lies in that statement of the apostle that we shall give an account of the deeds *done in the body.*

One of the favorite sayings of our Lord was, That which is hid shall be uncovered. The Last Judgment will be a day of uncovering. On the hopeful and brighter side, that uncovering will bring to life many secret things which were good. Strange discoveries will be made in that day; noble dispositions which in this life never revealed their full beauty to mortal eyes shall there be displayed in all their splendor, and generous purposes which in this life were crushed for want of power to execute them shall stand forth in all their beauty. "Pious and noble actions, hid under a veil of modesty, or misconstrued by prejudice and ignorance, and affectionate aspirations and devout exercises of the heart which lay open only to the eyes of Omniscience, will be brought to full light and receive the approbation of the Supreme Judge before the assembled universe."

But with that there will be other less happy surprises. Then the hidden works of iniquity and darkness shall be brought to light. The mask of respectability and decency shall be torn from the soul of the formalist and hypocrite. The man who was thought to be a model of humility will be discovered as a proud self-worshiper, and he who was regarded as an example of purity and chastity will have his lecherous nature exposed. Then every man shall stand before the world without

mask or veil, or disguise of any sort. We shall know even as we are known. All character will become luminous. What light does this throw upon that saying of Jesus, "They that are in their graves shall come forth, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and contempt." If the thought of such a self-revelation, even to a few people about us now, to our friends, to those who would be the most charitable in their judgment, is sufficient to appall us and make us shudder, what will it be when the secrets of all hearts are declared to God and the assembled hosts of humanity? This alone is sufficient to make those words of admonition and of warning ring and echo in your ears: "Prepare to meet thy God."

THE FATE OF THE HEATHEN

The heathen and all those who have never heard of Christ will be judged according to the light which they have. Beethoven, when he composed his "Mass in D," is said to have forgotten the possibilities and range of the human voice. But the judgments of God will take into consideration the capacities and possibilities of human nature. Those who had not the law of Moses or the revelation of the gospel will be judged by the light which they had. "These, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the works of the law written in their hearts, *their conscience*

also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another; in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." In that great verse St. Paul not only states the principles of judgment for the heathen, but how those condemned will acquiesce in the judgment. Their own conscience will register and approve the judgment of God.

JEWS AND CHRISTIANS

Men who had the advantage of a special revelation will be judged in the light of that revelation; the Jews by the law of Moses; the Christians by the gospel. When a man says, "I believe in salvation by character," he states a great principle of judgment. But when he claims salvation by character in lieu of salvation by faith in Christ, he forgets that one of the supreme tests, indeed *the* supreme test, of character is the reaction of the mind and heart to the offer of the gospel through Christ. As men accept or reject that offer, so do they reveal their character.

THE FINAL SEPARATION

In every reference he made to the future judgment, Christ emphasized the fact of separation. The Judgment will be a manifestation of men's lives and characters. That is what Paul meant when he said, "We shall all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ." We shall

become luminous there. We shall be revealed to ourselves, to one another, and to God. That revelation will result, logically, naturally, inevitably, in separation. It is true that here in this world there are men who are altogether different and separate as to disposition and character; but that difference is generally disguised and hid by custom, habit, and manner of life. The real fundamental difference between men, like the difference between the two thieves on the cross, will be not only exhibited and manifested, but will determine their destiny and their separation. The inspired writer says of Judas, not with any spirit of denunciation, but only dwelling with grief and horror on his transgression, that "he went to his own place." We have our own place, and we will find it in the next world just as we find it here. That separation and judgment will be confirmed by conscience. No one will be condemned who has not already been condemned by his own conscience.

This separation will be a *final* separation. Christ everywhere makes that plain. When the five foolish virgins came to the door, the bridegroom refused them admission: "The door was shut." There is no intimation that it would ever be opened for them again. In his own great prefiguration of the day of judgment Christ said of those on his right hand, "And these shall go away into everlasting life"; and of those on his

left hand, "and these into everlasting punishment."

WILL REVEAL GOD'S LOVE AND JUSTICE

The judgment will be the full and final revelation of God's love and justice. We may have our difficulties in trying to reconcile the justice of God and the love of God. The cross is as near as we can come to a reconciliation of justice and love. Indeed, that is the great reconciliation. There infinite love and infinite justice met together in the eternal embrace of Calvary. God would not be love unless he were just; and he could not be a true and just Judge unless he were also love. So the Judgment Day, instead of being the enigma and the mystery among the doctrines of the Christian faith, is the one doctrine which, perhaps more than any other, solves the problem of good and evil, which is the riddle of the universe. The Judge of all the earth will do right.

"God's justice is a bed,
Where we our anxious hearts may lay,
And, weary with ourselves, may sleep
Our weariness away."

IX

THE HOLY SPIRIT

When Paul came to Ephesus on his third missionary journey, he found there twelve men who had received the baptism of John and knew little more than that. When Paul said to them, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" their answer was, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Spirit."

Even the most disloyal Christian, even the poorest hanger-on about a Christian Church, has at least heard of the Holy Ghost. The formula of baptism and the apostolic benediction have served to make the name of the Holy Ghost familiar to all Christians, however little they may honor him in their life or in their prayers.

The Holy Spirit is at once the greatest reality and the greatest unreality. God is in the world through the presence of his Holy Spirit. Were the gracious workings of the Holy Spirit in proportion to the Church's recognition of him, then woe to the Church. But, fortunately, he works and abides, not according to our recognition or worship, but according to our need and according to the great plan of God and the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ. Just what do we mean when we say that we believe in the Holy Ghost, or when

we baptize our children into his name, or when we bless the living in the name of God the Holy Spirit?

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD

When we say we believe in the Holy Spirit, we confess that the Holy Spirit is God. The Scriptures give to the Holy Spirit attributes which can belong to God only. He is the Eternal Spirit through whom Christ offered himself for our sins. He is omniscient, for "the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." The Spirit is present everywhere. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" To the Holy Spirit belongs the power to convert and regenerate the heart of man. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit," Christ said, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. . . . The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

The Spirit is omnipotent. He has the power of God. The angels who announced the Incarnation said to Mary, "Thou shalt conceive, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus." When Mary wondered how this could be, the angel answered, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

The Holy Spirit was the divine agent through whom was wrought the great miracle of the Incarnation.

That the Holy Spirit is God is shown also by the fact that what is said of God is said also of the Spirit. In the last recorded sermon we have of St. Paul, that which he preached in his house at Rome to the Jews, he said he would turn from the Jews to the Gentiles, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah the prophet. "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive." Paul is quoting from the book of Isaiah where the prophet had a vision of the glory of God in the temple. But the one who speaks in Isaiah is Jehovah. Paul quotes the utterance as an utterance of the Holy Ghost. The conclusion then is that what the Holy Ghost says, God says. A sin against the Holy Ghost is a sin against God, for when Ananias had kept back a part of the price of the field which he had sold, Peter asked him why he had lied to the Holy Ghost, and then immediately said, "Thou hast not lied unto man, but unto God."

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSON

The Holy Spirit is a person who is distinct from the Father and from the Son. Is it not possible, one might ask, that these references in the Bible

to the Holy Spirit are just another way of speaking of God the Father, for is not God a Spirit? But there is unmistakable evidence that by the Holy Spirit a person distinct from the Father and from the Son is meant. The three personalities are distinguished in the formula of baptism, where one is baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. These persons are distinguished also in the formula of the apostolic benediction—the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, the communion of the Holy Spirit. At the baptism of Jesus, the three Persons are present. Christ, the Son, comes up out of the Jordan where John has baptized him; the voice of God the Father speaks out of the clouds, and the Holy Spirit descends in the form of a dove upon the Son.

Nor is the Holy Spirit simply the name of an influence, or an effect produced by God. He has the attributes of a Person; he can be lied to, he can be resisted, he can be grieved, he can be insulted. This could not be true of an influence, save by way of personification. Moreover, the Holy Ghost is referred to in the New Testament in terms which clearly show his distinct personality. When Paul and Barnabas left Antioch on the first missionary journey, the Holy Spirit said to the assembled disciples, "Separate unto me Paul and Barnabas." Such a reference as this makes it impossible to think of the Holy Spirit

as just an influence. How can an influence regenerate, or teach, or convict, or speak, or testify, or comfort, or pray? Yet all these things are said of the Holy Spirit.

FROM THE CREATION TO CHRIST

The work of the Holy Spirit may be traced in three great periods—from the creation of the world to the coming of Christ; from the coming of Christ to the day of Pentecost; and from the day of Pentecost to the Second Advent, or the end of the world.

The Spirit of God was the agent of the creation of the world. The earth, we are told, was without form, and void; and that darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light; and there was light."

The Spirit is the upholder of the moral order. In a day when wickedness was great upon the earth God said, "My Spirit shall always strive with man." When the influence of the Holy Spirit was withdrawn, the world sank back into its original chaos; and in the story of the flood we have more than a great physical catastrophe; we have a great moral truth—namely, that the Spirit of God is the upholder of the moral order. The world is bad enough as it is; and, to our view, often looks like a heaving chaos of passion and

anarchy. But everywhere there is some kind of government and a recognition of authority. Even in the most enlightened land we find great wickedness and corruption, and we may well wonder that human nature does not cast off all its restraint and abandon itself to the excess of its own passion. Yet, for some reason, the world has not been able to destroy itself. The reason for this is the restraining and subduing influence of the Holy Spirit. Were he to withdraw his gracious presence, the world would sink back into a chaos of sin and anarchy.

The Holy Spirit, who was the agent of creation and of providence, was also the agent of revelation and inspiration. The great prophets received their message from him; holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. We need not be troubled because we cannot understand just how they were moved; but we can accept the fact. Their magnificent utterances are a witness to their divine Spirit-breathed origin, and the way in which their predictions were fulfilled in Christ show that they cannot have been just the shrewd guesses of men. The only explanation of these predictions is the explanation which Peter gives, when he says that the Holy Spirit was testifying to the prophets beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.

The Holy Spirit was the agent of the Incarnation and the agent of the Resurrection. These two great facts are the boundaries of Christ's earthly ministry. What lies between them was also the work of the Spirit. After Christ had been baptized by John, he was baptized of the Spirit. Then the Spirit drove him into the wilderness to receive the baptism of fire, the baptism of temptation. It was in the Spirit that Christ began to preach, saying, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Before his death, Christ promised his disciples that he would send them the Holy Spirit. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth. . . . He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Through the Eternal Spirit, we are told by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Christ offered himself without spot unto God. The whole ministry of Christ was with the aid and the power of the Holy Spirit.

OUR OWN AGE

The third period of the Holy Spirit's work is the age or dispensation in which we live, or the period between the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was given to the Church, and the coming of Christ. On the night before his crucifixion, and afterwards on the day of his ascension, Christ promised his disciples that the Holy Spirit would come to visit them, and that his coming would make them witnesses unto him, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. When the bystanders mocked and said, "These men are full of new wine," Peter answered that what they were seeing was not drunkenness, the effect of new wine, but the effect of a new *fact* and a new *power*—namely, the coming of the Holy Spirit—and that God, in keeping with his ancient promise, had poured out his Spirit upon men.

In the establishment and development of the Church, the leader and inspirer is always the Holy Spirit, convincing and converting sinners and comforting and building up believers. It is the Spirit who directs Philip to go near to the Ethiopian eunuch's chariot and preach the gospel to him. It is the Spirit who tells Paul what to

write and what to preach. The mighty conquest of the Christian Church in those first ages was due to the power and working of the Holy Spirit.

The special, peculiar, and gracious work of the Holy Spirit is the conversion and regeneration of sinners. Without the Holy Spirit, we cannot hear the gospel, we cannot believe. His operations are like the wind. Christ said: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit." As the wind is free in his operations, not to be guided or controlled by man, so also is the Spirit. "He quickeneth whom he will." His wind bloweth where it listeth, and just as mysterious, too, as the wind is the working of the Holy Spirit; "Thou canst not tell." Nevertheless we can hear the sound thereof, and we can witness the transforming effects of the Spirit's presence and work. The fruits of the Spirit, which are joy, love, peace, long-suffering, patience, gentleness, kindness—this we can all recognize.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND PREACHING

Because of the solitary preëminence of the Holy Spirit in the great work of conversion and regeneration, it behooves every teacher and preacher of the gospel to be humble. For since only the Holy Spirit can convert and change the

heart, it lets us know that our learning and eloquence and industry avail us absolutely nothing, but only so much sounding brass or tinkling cymbal unless the Spirit own and bless it. Yet this fact of the Spirit's working gives great encouragement to the preacher and the teacher of Christian truth, for it lets him know that the Holy Spirit can take the poor stumbling words, the humblest effort of the weakest follower of Christ, and use them to break down the heart of stone, and work the perennial and beautiful miracle of repentance unto life and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The word of man is nothing, but the Word of God, used by the Holy Spirit, can make the dead live.

In a great vision of the Old Testament the prophet Ezekiel was taken to a valley where a great battle had been fought and where now rank upon rank, row upon row, grim skeletons grin from the helmets which encased them, and rusted, unlifted lances lie across the bones of the hands which had once brandished them in the face of the foe. Awed and overwhelmed by this ghastly array, the prophet stood in silence beholding the terrible spectacle. At length his heavenly guide said to him, "Son of man, can these bones live?" The prophet could only answer, "O Lord, thou knowest." How they could live, Ezekiel could not tell. Then the angel tells Ezekiel to prophesy over these bones and say unto them, "O ye dry

bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live." When Ezekiel had uttered his prophecy, the Valley of Death shook with a great earthquake, and with a mighty noise the dismembered and scattered bones came together, bone to bone. But still they were only skeletons. There was no breath in them, and therefore no life. Then, at the command of the Lord, Ezekiel prophesied again, saying, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." In answer to his supplication, the wind came upon the dead bodies and they lived and stood up upon their feet an exceeding great army.

Everywhere we see dead Churches, dead Christians, dead ministers; but when the Spirit of God, the sacred wind, begins to blow, the dead bones live. The religious state of England before the days of the Wesleys and the Whitefields bore sad witness to the need of a great revival. Yet there was no sign that the Holy Spirit would work such a revival, and dry bones lay bleaching in every town and hamlet of England. To his son Charles, Samuel Wesley, long in his grave when the great awakening at length came, had once written: "Charles, be steady. The Christian faith will surely revive in these kingdoms. You shall see it, though I shall not." The day

at length came when John Wesley, standing on his father's grave at Epworth Churchyard, preached the good tidings of the revival of Christianity in Great Britain. In every period of doubt and unbelief, the Church's hope is the gracious work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we ought always to pray, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." Here is a power which is beyond human calculation, a power which the scientist cannot follow or calculate, a power which mocks at skepticism and unbelief, and discovers no heart too wicked or too hard for it to break and change.

THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT

What is the sin and blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? Jesus, on a Sabbath, had healed the poor wretch who was blind, dumb, and possessed of the devil. The common people saw in this miracle an indication that Christ might be the Messiah, the son of David; but when the Pharisees heard of it, they said, This man doth not cast out demons, but by Beelzebub, the prince of demons. Jesus showed the absurdity of their charge, and that Satan could not and would not cast out Satan; and how the fact that he had healed such a man was proof that he had done it by the Spirit of God and that the kingdom of God was in their midst. Then he added those unspeakably solemn and arresting words: "Every

sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this world or in that which is to come."

No jugglery of exegesis can take away from the awe and solemnity of these words of Christ. This at least we can say, that Christ's utterance about the sin against the Holy Ghost seems to have been suggested by the conduct of those who belittled the Holy Spirit as he works through Christ and the gospel. Many persons, when the unpardonable sin is spoken of, rummage the depositaries of their memory to hit upon some one deed of enormity to which forgiveness will not be extended. But we are taught that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from *all* sin. You cannot admit that a single sin is inexpiable without also admitting that Christ is a limited Saviour. There is no sin, no matter how dark, malignant, heinous, crimson in its inveteracy, unfathomable in its turpitude, which is beyond the saving and purifying power of Christ. Thank God for that! Christ is able to save even unto the uttermost.

Whatever the blasphemy and sin against the Holy Spirit is, whether a spoken word or a cruel heart, an act of passion or a deed of shame, com-

mitted by those who have never believed, or committed by those who once believed and then fell away—it is a sin against which all of us may well be warned. The Holy Spirit offers us forgiveness and eternal life in Christ, and whatever may be said by way of interpretation of those solemn and mysterious words of our Lord concerning the unpardonable sin, it certainly is clear and true that whoever finally rejects the offer of pardon for sin in Christ—and that offer is made through the Holy Spirit—commits an unpardonable sin. It is an unpardonable sin because the sinner will not take the pardon, not because God will not pardon him. Therefore, let us take heed, we are told, lest we sin away our day of grace.

The Scriptures describe three different relationships between a man and the Holy Spirit. First, grieving the Holy Spirit. We grieve him when we stain our souls with any act or deed of sin. Second, resisting him. We resist the Holy Spirit when we refuse to heed his voice as he invites us to put our trust in Christ, and warns us against delay in penitence and unbelief. Third, quenching him. We quench the Holy Spirit when we have resisted him so persistently and obstinately that he withdraws himself from us. Then the condition of man is hopeless. His friends may pray earnestly to God for him; the joys and sorrows of the world may visit him in impartial succession; the Church bells may sound

in his ears; the hymns of grace and redemption may echo all about him, and the preacher may reason with him of righteousness and temperance and judgment to come; death itself may knock and bid him prepare to depart. But in vain all these ministries: because the Holy Spirit no longer speaks through them. They are as music to the deaf ear, or as the light of the morning sun to the eyes of the corpse upon the battle field.

One of the painters produced a picture called "Abandoned." It is a seascape. One can see the sky dark and lowering, with jagged flashes of lightning athwart it; the ocean is wild, hungry, and angry, full of threat and menace. There is only one thing in sight, and that is the huge bulk of a ship; its masts are gone; its rigging gone; its boats gone; its crew gone; and there it lies, rolling in the trough of the angry seas, abandoned. So on the sea of life is that soul from whom God has withdrawn his Holy Spirit. That was the fate from which David prayed to be delivered, when, after his terrible sin against Uriah and Bathsheba, the sin of adultery and murder, he cried, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

X

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

When he was a prisoner at Rome, St. Paul wrote a letter to his best friend and disciple, Timothy, whom he had left in charge of the Church at Ephesus. In this letter Paul gives Timothy advice and instructions, not only for his own personal life, but for his guidance as a minister of a Christian congregation. In the midst of these sundry exhortations and instructions comes his great statement about the Church: "The house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

Paul's metaphor is borrowed from the ancient temple. The prisoner at Rome conceives of the Church of Christ as the corner stone of a temple of truth, and again as a great Corinthian pillar which holds up the truth as a Corinthian column held up the roof of a temple. It is altogether likely that St. Paul wished to impress Timothy with the grandeur of the Christian Church, especially as Ephesus, the home of Timothy, boasted the greatest temple of the world, the Temple of Diana. Upon foundations which had been made firm with unusual labor and care, so as to guard against earthquakes, rose this majestic temple, 425 feet in length and 239 feet in width. The temple con-

sisted of a series of colonnades and courts, all centering about the inner chapel, or shrine, which housed the altar of sacrifice and the idol of worship and veneration. At Ephesus this inner temple, or the temple proper, was about four times the size of the Temple of Athena, the Parthenon, at Athens. Ancient coins give us a very clear idea of what the building was like. In the front and rear were two rows of eight columns each, and on either side of the sanctuary two rows of twenty columns. Each column was a monolith of marble fifty-five feet in height. The temple was all-glorious within, with the paintings and sculptures of Praxiteles, Apelles, and Phidias. The doors were of carved cypress wood surmounted by vast transoms, and the stairway which led to the roof had been made of a single gigantic vine of cypress. The roof was covered with large white marble tiles, and to the sailors on the decks of ships approaching the harbor the temple gleamed in the distance with the brilliancy and beauty of a star. But all this glory of architecture was for the sake of a hideous wooden block, the image of Diana.

As Timothy went to and fro at Ephesus upon his pastoral rounds, looking after his Church in which there were not many noble and not many great, and saw the sun reflected from the glorious temple of Diana, he was to remember that he was the minister of a grander temple, the temple of

Christian truth, for the Church of the living God is the pillar and the ground of the truth.

With but one exception, all the declarations of the Apostles' Creed confess faith in one of the Persons of the Trinity—God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Ghost; or in the great acts and the great gifts of God, such as the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, and Life Everlasting. The one exception is the statement about the Church: "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." This is not the confession of faith in one of the Persons of the Trinity, nor in the great redemptive acts of God; but in a divinely established institution through which Jesus Christ speaks and ministers to the world.

The Church, then, is an object of faith and an object of affection. Christ is the founder of a divine society. He is never represented as just a Saviour of solitary souls. Always, what he seems to have in mind is a company of believers. When he came into the world he called men to be his disciples, and when he left the world he sent them out to preach the gospel to every creature and to call men into their company. He is the Shepherd, not of a few sheep merely, but the Shepherd of a flock; the King of a kingdom, the Head of a body which has many members. Through his company, called out of the world, the Holy Spirit does his work. There is, therefore, no such thing as a true Christian who does not believe in the

Church and who does not love the Church. No one can truly believe in Christ and be loyal to Christ without at the same time believing in the Church and loving and serving the Church, for Christ founded the Church, loved it, and redeemed it. A man might just as well claim to be a Christian who says he does not believe in God the Father Almighty, or in Jesus Christ his only Son, or that he was crucified, dead, and buried, as one who says he does not believe in the holy catholic Church. To-day we have an increasing number of those who claim that they can be loyal to Christ and do Christ's works outside of the Church and without any faith in the Church. It ought to be clearly said, therefore, that such a thing is impossible: the Church is God's purpose for the world. Christ's Church is the pillar and ground of the truth.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

The Church has two manifestations, or two forms of existence—the visible Church and the invisible. The visible Church consists of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion. When we say that we believe in the Church, we mean also this *visible* Church which is constituted of the believers throughout the world. Then there is the *invisible* Church, a much wider and grander thought of the Church. This Church has been defined as follows: "The Catholic or Universal Church, which is invisible, consists of the whole

number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ, the Head thereof."

The invisible Church, therefore, is made up, not only of the true believers who are to-day in the Church upon earth, but the true believers of every age, and the whole company of redeemed men who are now in heaven. Thus, in its widest definition, the Catholic Church takes in yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow, and the Church in heaven as well as the Church upon earth. The expression which follows the article about the Church in the Apostles' Creed brings this out very clearly: "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church, and the Communion of Saints (believers)." This means the fellowship in faith and love of members of Christ's Church, not only with those now on earth who are in the Church, but with those who have been in the Church in past ages, with those who are yet to be born into the Church, and with all redeemed souls in heaven. The expression, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, as used in the New Testament, probably implies something a little different from the Church, especially from the visible and temporal Church upon earth. For instance, one could hardly pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Church come"; for the Church is already here, established by Christ, and the chief mission of the Church is to bring men into the kingdom of heaven, and thus establish and usher in that glorious kingdom.

THE CHURCH IS CHRIST'S BODY

Although there is no studied definition of the Church in the New Testament, just as there is no studied definition of God in the Bible, nevertheless, from the many statements made about the Church, we can gather a clear idea of what the Church is and what its work is in the world. St. Paul's favorite metaphor by which he expresses the nature and the mission of the Church is the "body of Christ." Christ is the head, and the Church is his body. It is through the body that a man's mind and spirit expresses itself. Whatever he wants to do in this world a man must do through his body. Now, the Church, we are told, is the body of Christ; that is, it is the organism through which Christ speaks to the world and does his work for the world. A head without a body would be like a fountain without a stream, or the sun without a ray. Christ without a body in the world through which to express himself and do his works would be just like a head without a body; and, on the other hand, a body without a head would be a poor, worthless corpse. As there are members in the body, but just one head and one spirit, so there are many individual members and many different congregations and Churches in the one Catholic and Universal Church, which is Christ's body.

DIVINE IN ITS ORIGIN

Christ used the term "Church," as we think of it to-day, on just two occasions. The first and the greatest of these was when Peter, in answer to Christ's question, had confessed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Christ blessed him for this utterance, said that it was inspired of God, and that upon the truth to which Peter had given expression he would build his Church: "Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

It is quite out of keeping with the facts of Christian history to say that Jesus was just a Teacher, an incarnation of truth, and that he founded no society and left no Church. Here, in the plainest terms, he tells us his purpose to build a Church and what the foundation of the Church is to be—that is, himself as the eternal Son of God. This is why in all but a few heretical Churches the first condition of membership has always been a confession of faith in Jesus as the Son of God. Man did not build the Church, and man cannot preserve the Church. It is divine in its origin, divine in those powers bestowed upon it, and divine in its destiny.

THE CHURCH IS THE CUSTODIAN OF THE TRUTH

When Christ, just before he was crucified, prayed for his disciples, and for all who through them should believe on his name in the ages to

come, he said of his disciples that he had given them the truth of God. It is impossible to think of the Church without the truth—that is, the more than human wisdom and knowledge which has been revealed to it through Jesus Christ. So Paul said in his letter to Timothy that the Church of the living God is the pillar and ground of the truth. This is in accordance with the facts of history. The Scriptures were given to those in the Church. They have been preserved by the Church, and even in its darkest periods the visible Church has never pretended to rest upon any other foundation than Christ, or have any other authority than the authority of the holy Scriptures. There are innumerable worthy organizations among men on earth, but the Church is the only one which claims to be guided and ruled and founded upon the Word of God as contained in the Scriptures. The Church is not a reform agency merely, neither is it a philanthropic society; nor is it an association of men banded together in quest of truth. The Church exists because it has been given the truth: Christ says of those in the Church to-day what he said of his disciples in the beginning—"I have given them thy word"—and he prays for his disciples to-day as he prayed for them then, that they might be "kept by the truth."

THE CHURCH IS ONE

Since the true Church is the body of Christ, it follows that the Church is one. But what, then, shall we make of the several hundred varieties of Protestantism and the rival claims of the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Catholic Church to be the only true and Catholic Church? These divisions of the visible Church separate and, too often, alienate Christians from Christians. The Turks are said to pray that the divisions of Christians shall never be healed. But Christ prayed for his Church, for his believers, that they may all be one, and the reason assigned was that the world might believe that Christ had come from the Father and that he loved the world. Unity among his believers Christ declared to be one of the chief recommendations of and evidences for the divine origin of the Church. We are proud of our historic denominations and the witness they have made to the truth, whether we are Methodists, Episcopalians, Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, or belonging to any of the other Protestant bodies; or whether we are Roman Catholics or Greek Catholics. Yet every true disciple of Christ must regret these divisions, in so far as they interfere with Christian unity and sympathy; and all true followers of Christ will repeat his prayer that his people shall be one. We all would like to see his Church not divided and rent

asunder, but one, like his seamless robe for which the Roman soldiers cast their lot.

Nevertheless the true invisible and catholic Church is, and always has been, one. In this sense it has never been necessary to pray for Church unity. The true Church has always been united. Even among the many denominations or sects of Christianity, there is a true unity; not a uniformity, but a unity. Wherever men confess Christ as the Son of God, and accept the Scriptures as the Word of God and the only rule to direct us how we may glorify God and enjoy him forever—there you have a true unity, notwithstanding the fact that individual members of these different communions may not have a true recognition of that unity. I cannot separate myself from the Roman Catholic who believes in Christ as the Son of God and in his atonement for the sins of the world; neither can the Roman Catholic, whatever he may think of me and my Church, separate himself altogether from me if I hold those same great beliefs; and as there is a unity between believers in the different bodies of the visible Church now on earth, so there is a grand and perfect unity between the true believers of all ages, on earth and in heaven, who are members of the invisible Church of Christ.

THE CHURCH AND ITS INFLUENCE

The most significant object in any country

panorama, or in any great city or capital upon earth, is a Christian Church. Just as the fact of the Church is the one great fact of human history. Christ said that the Church was the salt of the earth. The history of the world since and of the world to-day is the confirmation of that verdict. Dr. Chalmers used to say: "The world is bad enough with Christianity; what would it be without it?" The poorest church building, a mere wooden shack with broken windows and whining organ and bare benches and scattered worshipers, and a dull preacher, is yet a far more significant fact in any community or city than a library with its thousands of volumes, or a bank with its Grecian columns and its vaults bursting with silver and gold. And for this reason, that even the poorest of Churches may be a medium through which the Holy Spirit will speak to and work in the world.

Whether we judge by present effects, or by the forces which produce effects, the Church stands by itself; and it is the easiest thing in the world to trace back to a fountain of Christian source and origin all those movements and institutions outside of organized Christianity to-day which are doing a noble work for mankind. No one has expressed more powerfully the beneficial effects of the Church upon human society than did James Russell Lowell. He said: "The worst kind of religion is no religion at all, and these men living

in ease and luxury, indulging themselves in the amusement of going without religion, may be thankful that they live in lands where the gospel they neglect has tamed the beastliness and ferocity of the men who, but for Christianity, might long ago have eaten their carcasses like the South Sea Islanders, or cut off their heads and tanned their hides like the monsters of the French Revolution. When the microscopic search of skepticism, which has hunted the heavens and sounded the seas to disprove the existence of a Creator, has turned its attention to human society, and has found a place on this planet ten miles square where a decent man can live in decency, comfort, and security, supporting and educating his children, unspoiled and unpolluted; a place where age is reverenced, infancy respected, manhood respected, womanhood honored, and human life held in due regard, when skeptics can find such a place ten miles square on this globe, where the gospel of Christ has not gone and cleared the way and laid the foundation and made decency and security possible, it will then be in order for the skeptical literati to move thither, and there ventilate their views."

In one of the great visions of the Old Testament, Ezekiel was shown a fountain of water issuing from under the doors of the temple. He and his heavenly conductor followed this river as it flowed under the temple. At a thousand

furlongs, the angel measured the river, and it was up to the ankles. At another thousand furlongs, it was up to the knees. At still another thousand furlongs, it was up to the waist, and finally a river to swim in, a river which could not be crossed. This vision of the holy waters has always been taken as a parable of the divine origin, the blessed influences, the growth and increase of the Church of Jesus Christ. The river which Ezekiel saw flowing from under the temple as it wound its way across the hot desert left behind it a trail of green vegetation and pleasant savannas. Even the Dead Sea was healed and cured by the waters of this river pouring into it. "Everything shall live whither the river cometh." So across the desert of human history we can tell where the Church has gone by the green trees of its benediction and its influences. For all we know, we may be still only in the ankle stage of this river of Christian truth and influence. It will grow and continue like the mystic river of Ezekiel's dream; and whether we are only in the ankle stage of Christian truth, or whether, as some think, we are near the end of the present dispensation, the history of Christianity is of a nature to give us unshaken confidence in the great promises that this river will eventually redeem the desert and make it blossom like the rose, and heal the Dead Sea of human corruption and sin. Then shall the prophet's dream be fulfilled, when

the whole earth shall be covered with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

With a noble logic, the Apostles' Creed puts the belief in the Communion of Saints immediately after the confession of faith in the Church. The word "saints" is here used in its New Testament sense of believers. The Communion of Saints means, first of all, a fellowship between those who at this time are members of the visible Church upon earth. In spite of the denominational differences and barriers, there is between all true believers a real fellowship and unity which no official barriers or utterances can hinder or destroy. But the communion of saints is something more than this fellowship between believers now in the visible Church, noble though that fellowship is. It is a fellowship with the great and the good, the humble and the true, who in the past ages have been members of the true Church of Christ. When we say we believe in the communion of saints, that takes in, not only the Church of to-day, but the Church of the first century, the Church in the New Testament, and the Church in the Old Testament. I join my hands and my songs with Augustine, St. Paul, St. Peter, St. John, and with Isaiah, and Elijah, and Samuel, and David, and Abraham. I take my stand side by side with the goodly fellowship of the

prophets, with the glorious company of the apostles, and with the noble army of the martyrs. I have fellowship, too, with saints who are nearer at hand than that; with those dear ones whom I have loved and lost awhile, and who are remembered, not so much for heroic actions which won general and popular admiration, but for "those gentle, quiet, ceaseless virtues which found their sphere in the seclusion of the home." Now, by their translation out of this world, a seal has been set upon their characters; they are no longer subject to temptation and toil; they have, as Shelley said of Keats, "outsoared the shadow of our night." No more can they be sullied by contact with the earth; they take their places like stars in a region of purity and peace; "they come to our thoughts clad in the light of celestial sanctity and sweetness."

But not only by recollection do we have communion with the saints, but by hope and expectation. Socrates said he looked forward with a thrill of expectation to conversing with Homer and the mighty dead of the ancient world. If so, how much more can the Christian look forward to meeting the great men of the Old Testament and the New Testament, and the heroes of faith ever since! What a day that will be, when, in a personal interview, we can thank Moses and David and Isaiah for their witness to Christ before he came, and Paul and John and Peter, and all the

saints, martyrs, and apostles who followed the Lamb of God!

"Come, let us join our friends above
That have obtained the prize,
And on the eagle wings of love
To joy celestial rise;
E'en now by faith we join our hands
With those that went before,
And greet the blood-besprinkled bands
On the eternal shore."

XI

THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN

The darkest fact in man is sin. The grandest fact in God is forgiveness. John Chrysostom, Christianity's most eloquent preacher, used to say, "There is only one calamity—sin."

The one fact with which the Bible deals is the fact of sin—its origin, its curse and penalty, and the forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ. When John the Baptist saw Jesus the day after he had baptized him in the Jordan, he exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." That utterance of the great Baptist is the shortest and most comprehensive definition of Christ and his work ever given. It was a prophetic forecast of what Christ was to do for mankind. One of the disciples of John who heard him make that comment upon Jesus, and, hearing it, turned to follow Jesus and became his disciple, was John, the author of the fourth Gospel. When, long afterwards, he was granted his great vision of the destiny of the world and the triumph of the kingdom of God, it is the Lamb of God whom he beholds upon the Throne of the Universe, opening the Seven Seals' Book of man's destiny, and receiving the praise

and adoration of those who have been redeemed through his blood.

There are many other things which John the Baptist might have said about Jesus, and which are now being said of him by men throughout the world. John might have said, "Behold the Man whose birth is the watershed of history, dividing it into two parts—before Christ and after Christ." John might have said, "Behold the Man who did no sin, and whose blameless life will leave the world the great example of how to live." Or he might have cried out, "Behold the Man, the carpenter's son, who never wrote a line save in the dust, and yet the Man whose words have done more to temper, and soften, and regenerate mankind than all the sayings of the philosophers and all the books of the sages." Again, he might have said, "Behold the Man whose life shall be a fountain of compassion, whence shall flow the healing streams of mercy and pity." Or he might have said, "Behold the Man who was in the world and yet not of it, and who more than any other has brought life and immortality to light." Or he might have said, "Behold the Man whose death on the cross will be the supreme example of vicarious suffering and voluntary sacrifice." All these things John might have said about Jesus, and yet have missed the one great thing—and that is the fact that Jesus is the One through whom we have forgiveness of sin. It was for that purpose

that he came into the world. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

In the midst of the great confessions and declarations of the Apostles' Creed we come upon the confession, "I believe in the forgiveness of sin." This is the great objective truth of Christianity. All the great truths of the Creed concerning God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and the great acts of Incarnation, Atonement, and Resurrection, and Judgment, and the great gift of Life Everlasting, center about this one grand fact—the forgiveness of sin. To make this possible, God sent Christ into the world, and for the forgiveness of sin Christ died on the cross. The night before his death he took the cup, an emblem of his blood, and said, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for many for the remission (forgiveness) of sin."

THE FACT OF SIN

If the great thing in Christianity is the forgiveness of sin, if forgiveness is not a part of the gospel, but *the* gospel itself, then it follows that there can be no true appreciation of Christ and no real confession of Christianity until there is, first of all, the conviction and the confession of sin. If we do not feel ourselves to be sinners, we can hardly be interested in the One who saves

us from our sins. If we do not know that we suffer from the disease of sin, we shall not regard highly the great remedy for sin.

SIN IS BREAKING GOD'S LAW

Perhaps the shortest and best definition of sin ever given is this: "Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God." This means that man is placed in a world under moral law, the author of which is God. Sin is the breaking of the law of God, and therefore, in the simplest and plainest words, a sinner is a lawbreaker. The widespread popular misconception as to sin is that by sin we mean merely those gross exhibitions of the evil in human nature, such as adultery, stealing, or murder. Men generally have a conception of crime—that is, the breaking of the laws of man and the doing of those things which are prejudicial to the interests of human society. But the Christian idea of sin goes far deeper than that. Such offenses as theft, lying, adultery, murder, are only surface exhibitions or eruptions of a universal condition in man's heart.

It was Jesus who was the great Teacher and Illustrator in this field. Men who had outwardly kept the Commandments were talking to him as if they were not sinners; but Christ made it clear to them that sin was a disease of the heart, and that the sinner was not only the man who killed his brother man, but the man who hated him; and

the adulterer not only the man who committed adultery in the body, but the man who committed adultery in the imagination, in the heart. If Christ is right about this, then sin is a much more serious thing than a great many men to-day are taking it to be. I have frequently heard men say, when the matter of their responsibility to God and to the Christian Church was pressed home upon them, that they had never committed any great sin, and that their lives were on the whole as good as those of the people with whom they live. The trouble here was that these men, as St. Paul put it in his usually thoughtful and epigrammatic manner, were measuring themselves by themselves. They were estimating human nature by human nature, and not by the law of God. Paul himself, in conflict with men who were bringing false charges against his moral character, said that he knew nothing against himself. But when he turned to face the majesty and purity of God, and to contemplate the price that had been paid for his redemption, even the precious blood of Christ, Paul had something very different to say about himself. Now he says of himself, "I am the chief of sinners."

The first step of the Christian life is a sense of unworthiness. In this connection it is an interesting and an arresting fact that the chief testimony to the power and universality of sin in the human heart does not come from contrition and

remorse on the part of desperate and notorious sinners, as we might at first naturally expect, but from the confession of the noblest and saintliest lives. The men who in their lives have come the nearest to God and have been the most Christlike in their character are the very ones who, like St. Paul, have described themselves as the "chief of sinners." One of the most eloquent and powerful of American Colonial preachers was James Waddel, the blind preacher of Virginia whose eloquence is celebrated in one of the most beautiful pieces of American prose, William Wirt's "British Spy." When this blind Boanerges lay dying, one of his friends, when he was about to leave him after a visit, expressed the wish that when he came to die he would have back of him, for his own comfort in such an hour, the record of a godly life like that of Waddel. At that, Waddel lifted his hand in protest and declared that if his only comfort were the thoughts of the life which he had lived, he would be wretched indeed. Instead of that his comfort was in the fact that the Lamb of God taketh away the sins of the world. It is one thing to know Christ as a great Teacher, or a great Example, or a great Leader and Warrior in the campaign against unrighteousness and injustice in the world, but it is another thing, a far different thing, and a far deeper thing, and a far grander thing, to know him as a Saviour from sin.

On Washington Irving's memorial tablet at Christ Church, Tarrytown, one can read these words: "Loved, honored, revered, he fell asleep in Jesus, March 28, 1859." That inscription is not just a conventional statement in the case of Washington Irving, for he was a devout and humble follower of Christ. His father and mother were Scotch Covenanters, and although the stern and severe discipline and training of that godly home was laying the foundation of the boy's future religious experience, his real Christian life did not commence till one day when he was going to attend a service in Trinity Church, New York City. As a rule he had found the long ritual of that Church tedious, and was impatient until it was over. But one Sunday he happened to enter the Church just when the words about the confession of sin were being read by the minister. Then, for the first time, the thought struck him that he, too, was a sinner and had sins to confess, and falling upon his knees, he joined in the confession of sins and henceforth followed Jesus as the One who saves us from our sins. All true Christian experience must commence there. Those who will not commence there must resign themselves to being strangers to the length, the breadth, the depth, the height of the city of God's love.

The place that forgiveness of sin takes in Christianity may be estimated if one were to delete

from the Bible the great confessions of sin, the cross as the great remedy for sin, and the great instances of men whose sins were forgiven. What a different book the Bible then would be! It would be like a glorious temple shrouded in darkness. One might apply the same test to the great music which has taken for its theme Christ and Christianity. Suppose that one were to leave out the cross and the forgiveness of sins, the grand notes of redemption—what then would be left of the oratorios? Or one might apply the same test to great poetry and to great art. Leave out of poetry and art and music the forgiveness of sin as exemplified in the death of Jesus on the cross, and you have left out the grandeur, the beauty, and the pathos of the musician, the artist, or the poet.

HOW GOD FORGIVES SIN

When we say that we believe in the forgiveness of sins, we must relate this confession to one already made—namely, he suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. The fourfold reiteration and emphasis of the death of Christ in the first part of the Apostles' Creed is the ground upon which we believe in the forgiveness of sin.

Since sin is the transgression of God's law, it follows that it must be punished. Whatever else God does, he must remain just. The Judge

of all the earth must do right. How, then, shall God deal with man who is the sinner, and who has broken his law? Here is the great problem of sin and forgiveness. When God forgives sin, pardons and restores the sinner, and yet at the same time upholds the majesty of his law, if sin had been universally punished, that solution would have been in strict keeping with justice. But the mystery and glory of Christianity are that it tells us that God is able to mete out justice, to do what is right, and yet at the same time show his love and his mercy. This he does not do by overlooking sin—God could not do that. If he did, he would be an unrighteous God. We do not respect even the earthly parent who pays no attention to the faults and misdemeanors of his children. Still less could we respect a God who was indifferent to the transgressions of men. Neither is there any chief way by which God can forgive sin. We are frequently told to-day that, even if man is a sinner, God can freely and easily forgive all sinners. But this ignores the fact that God is the center, the author, and the law of holiness and of justice. George Macdonald's quatrain expresses this popular idea as to the easy way in which sin can be forgiven:

"Here lie I, Martin Elginbrod.
Have mercy on my soul, O God,
As I would do, if I were God,
And you were Martin Elginbrod."

Here is an appeal to human pity. The argument is that the man who lies under this headstone ought to have free forgiveness just as he would forgive God if their places were exchanged. But this leaves out of the reckoning altogether the terrible nature and the terrible consequences of sin. Nor would a light forgiveness of that sort ever bring peace to the heart and conscience of man. Within the depths of his heart man yearns to be right with God, and such a method of forgiveness would never bring him the peace and satisfaction for which he yearns. But that peace and satisfaction he can possess through the divine method of forgiveness. As the great apostle stated it, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God."

How then shall God forgive sin? The answer is, Through faith in Jesus Christ, who died for the sins of the world. Repeatedly we are told in the New Testament that Christ died for our sins, that he took our place, that he drank our cup, that he paid our penalty. Therefore, when we see Christ hanging on the cross, the first fact to recognize and remember is that in the death of Christ God is punishing sin. Before we can receive the forgiveness of sin, we must understand and accept the punishment upon sin. The cross tells us that God remains just. He gives sin its due. God has shown his righteousness in other ways, in the judgments and catastrophes of wars of history,

in pestilence and in famine, in crushing providences, in the sting of conscience, and the whips and scorpions of remorse. In minds that have reeled and bodies that have rotted because of sin, in the wide and universal fact of death—in all these ways, God has revealed in his mind toward sin, and has showed that although the Lord is merciful and gracious, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, yet he will by no means clear the guilty. But the supreme and awful exhibition of the law of God and of the mind of God toward sin is the death of the only begotten Son of God upon the cross.

In God's method of forgiveness there will always be that which is beyond human comprehension. Were the cross not too great for our minds to fathom, it would not be great enough for the needs of our hearts. But the fact of the Incarnation, that Christ assumed human nature, throws some light on the mystery of the Atonement. In a real sense this human nature was lifted upon the cross and there bore the penalty of sin. Christ could represent me on the cross because he bore my nature. He could make satisfaction for me because he was made in all things as a man. Christ, my representative, dies and is punished on the cross. Thus it is that the cross throws a lurid light upon sin. The cross shows us what sin is, and what sin deserves, and we

can never receive in its full and glorious meaning the love of God until we recognize in the death and sufferings of Christ our own just punishment. We must take our place with the penitent thief on the cross by the side of Jesus and exclaim as he did when he looked upon Christ, "We receive the due reward of our deeds."

GOD FORGIVES THROUGH THE CRUCIFIED CHRIST

The cross not only shows us that God punishes sin, but reveals to us how God forgives sin. God remains just, inflexibly just, and yet at the same time through this great device of Calvary he is able to forgive sin and restore the sinner. This could never have occurred to human intellect or understanding. It is the great mystery of the gospel. To this Paul was referring, and not to the details of future life, when he said in one of his great passages (quoting Isaiah): "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the mind of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." The great thing to which Paul here refers is the forgiveness of sin. It was not a method or a plan upon which man could have arrived by any process of natural knowledge or development; nor could it even have entered into the imagination or thought of his heart; it was God's great plan and secret revealed in Christ on the cross.

HE DIED FOR ME

Never shall we get beyond the meaning of that brief sentence, that great something which had to be done before our sins could be forgiven, Christ died on the cross. God not only forgives sins, but he forgives them through faith in a crucified Redeemer. Other New Testament words help to bring out the greatness and the beauty of forgiveness. One of those words is "justified." Here a man is thought of as an accused person, but through belief in Christ he becomes justified —that is, unaccused, acquitted. He is not merely pardoned, but justified. Another word is "reconciled." Here we think of man as separated from God, but through faith in Christ he is reconciled to God and becomes God's friend. Another term is "forgiveness" or "remission." Here man is thought of as owing a debt which he cannot pay. But God on the cross forgives the debt. Jesus paid it all. Another, and perhaps the greatest word of all, is "redeemed." The most tender name we can give to Christ is to call him our "Redeemer." However rich or full the disciple's life may be, he falls short of the glory and splendor of Christian experience unless he can speak of Christ as his Redeemer. This word presents man as a slave. He is the slave to sin; he is in bondage of death because of sin. But through his own precious blood Christ redeems the sinner so that he is again free and belongs to God.

MAN'S PART

The only part man has to play in this sublime transaction of forgiveness is repentance and faith. He must repent of his sins before he will want a Saviour, and he must believe that Christ is that Saviour. Both repentance and faith are gifts of God through his Holy Spirit, whose work it is, as we say in the last article, to work in men's hearts repentance and faith. When we say, then, that we believe in Christ, we do not mean merely that we believe that he was the Son of God, that he loved the world and died for the sins of the world; but that he died for each one of us personally—as Paul put it, "He loved me and gave himself for me," and upon that fact we rest our hope of forgiveness and eternal life. We do not say we *know* the forgiveness of sin; we do not say we *feel* the forgiveness of sin; we do not say we *prove* the forgiveness of sin; but "I *believe*" in the forgiveness of sin. It is man's greatest privilege to receive by faith God's greatest gift, and without this faith, whatever else we are or may do, it is impossible to please God.

A PRACTICAL FAITH

To believe in the forgiveness of sins is not a selfish and impractical thing, centering only in ourselves. It is rather the fountain out of which flow all the Christian virtues. The greatest worker for mankind and Christ was, I suppose, St.

Paul. His sympathy took in the whole race of men. To him there was neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female. He cried, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is made to stumble, and I am not?" What was the source of that all-embracing love and that tremendous energy which took him throughout the Roman world proclaiming the gospel? It was the sense of his own forgiveness. He could say that he loved me and gave himself for me, and that meant that he must serve all men. So he cried, "The love of Christ constraineth me." If we would know how best to serve mankind, we must learn, first of all, how God has served us through Jesus Christ, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many.

THE GREATEST PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS

Few men did more for their day and generation and for the ages to come than the great Dutch scholar, Hugo Grotius. In his "Seven Great Statesmen," Dr. Andrew White, the late president of Cornell and ambassador to Germany, tells the story of his death. He had been wrecked in a vessel on the Pomeranian Coast. Battered by the elements and suffering from exposure, he managed to reach Rostock, where he lay down to die. The local pastor of the Lutheran Church came to call on him. He made no effort to wrestle with the dying scholar and statesman, but

simply read to him the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, ending with the words, "God be merciful to me a sinner." At that the dying sage lifted his wasted hand and exclaimed, "That publican, Lord, am I."

XII

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY AND THE LIFE EVERLASTING

During the Revolutionary War, a young officer in the British Army, before embarking for this country with his regiment, became engaged to a young lady in England. In one of the battles of the Revolution the officer was badly wounded and lost a leg. He accordingly wrote to his affianced bride, telling her how he was disfigured and maimed, and so changed from what he had been when she had last seen him and they had plighted their troth, that he felt it his duty to release her from all obligation to become his wife. The young lady wrote an answer not less noble than that which she had received from the young man. In this letter she disavowed all thought of refusing to carry out the engagement because of what had happened to her fiance in battle, and said that she was willing to marry him *if there was enough of his body left to hold his soul.*

The young woman's answer showed not only a depth of affection and nobility of nature, but also a true appreciation of the relationship of body and soul. She said she would marry the maimed officer if there was enough of his body left to

hold his soul. The main thing to her was her lover's soul, not his body. Yet she recognized the fact that the man's soul expressed itself in a body. It would have been an absurdity for her to say that, although they could not be united in life, she would marry his soul. A maimed and broken body could still be the organ through which the soul speaks; but a disembodied spirit would have been something altogether beyond the comprehension and experience of either the young man or the young woman. The soul is the great thing in man; but we must remember that the soul expresses itself, in this form of existence, in a body; that God in the creation gave man a body. Man is a union of body and soul. The Christian doctrine of the future is the resurrection of the body and life everlasting—that is, man's body raised up and fashioned anew, and now forever the home of the redeemed and purified spirit.

BETWEEN DEATH AND THE RESURRECTION

Where are our dead? Not, Where will they be after the resurrection? but where are they now—those friends whom we watched as they slipped away from us into the shadow and mists which hang over the river of death?

MATERIALISM

One answer is that of the materialist: They have ceased to exist. They are dead, not merely

in the sense that they no longer live in the flesh, but life for them is over forever. Such an answer, however it may be repeated or defended, runs counter to the great instincts and the great hopes of human nature.

THE SLEEP OF THE SOUL

A second answer is that our dead are in a state of unconscious existence—a sort of sleep out of which they will be called by the trumpet of the resurrection. The Scriptures do indeed frequently speak of the dead as those who "sleep." It is said of the patriarchs and the ancient kings that they "slept" with their fathers. Paul says of David that after he had served his own generation by the will of God, he "fell on sleep." Christ said of Lazarus: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." And St. Paul frequently refers to death as "asleep."

But to speak of men who had died as asleep was the most natural thing in the world. Death looks like sleep; the dead appear to be sleeping. No word so fitly describes the outward appearance of death as sleep. But when we employ this metaphor of sleep, or when we come across it in the pages of the Scriptures, we are not to think that at death the soul of man passes into a state like that of sleep. Even if we were to take those passages in the Bible which speak of the dead as "asleep" with the utmost literality, it would not

mean absolute unconsciousness, for the mind, as we know by experience, is active even in sleep.

The appearance of Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, Christ's parable of Dives and Lazarus, and what happened to each man at his death, and his own great word to the penitent thief, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise"—all this can hardly be fitted into the doctrine of the sleep of the soul.

PARADISE

A third account of the present state of the dead is that they are in paradise—that is, in a state of happiness, but one which is not final, but only preparatory to life everlasting, which follows the judgment of the last great day. The strongest argument which can be adduced for this so-called intermediate state is the fact that in the Bible the rewards of heaven and the punishments of hell follow after the general judgment, seeming to intimate that the final state cannot be entered until after the resurrection and the judgment. St. Paul makes it clear that in the resurrection the believer is to be clothed upon with his "house from heaven"—that is, the body of the resurrection. Yet he also says that to be "absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord."

ALREADY HAPPY

While we may recognize the New Testament teaching that the body of the resurrection is not

bestowed upon the believer until the last day, and that to inherit this body is to enter into the final reward of faith in Christ, still we are justified in thinking of our beloved and believing dead as already in a condition of glory and peace and happiness. In the grand words of the old Catechism, "Believers at their death do immediately pass into glory." The testimony of the Scriptures as to paradise, and in what respects it differs from heaven, is not clear. But of this, at least, we can be sure: Paradise is a state free from the curse and stain of sin. When Paul said that he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter, and when our Lord said to the dying thief, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise," the place to which they refer must be a state of purity and of happiness. So the great schoolman, Thomas Aquinas, in his "Summary of Theology," holds that those who enter into paradise are blessed and happy in a spiritual existence, and in the resurrection that happiness is increased, not in intensity, but in extension—that is, they enjoy the vision and the presence of God, not with the faculties of the soul alone, but with the totality of man's being, body and soul.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

It is a warm day at Athens in the year 66. On Mars' Hill a company of philosophers and Stoics

are met together to hear the message of a wandering Jew whom they think to be a setter forth of new gods. Facing this company of learned men, with the famous seat of the world's culture and knowledge at his feet, and just in front of him the beatiful gateway to the Acropolis, and beyond it the perfect glory of the Parthenon, with the great image of Athena standing near the temple, and the sun reflected from the great bronze spear which the goddess holds, fabricated from the trophies taken at Marathon, this wandering Jew commences to give an account of his beliefs and of his God. Taking for his text the inscription which he had seen on one of their altars, "To the Unknown God," he gives them his idea of God, and what he has done for the world and how he cannot be worshiped as an image, he declares God to be the Father of the race, and ever near to those who seek him; and that now, after centuries of patient waiting, God has called all men to repentance through Jesus Christ, by whom in the last great day he will judge the world. As a proof of the truth of this great future event, the preacher declares that God raised Christ from the dead.

A DERIDED DOCTRINE

Up to this point, the philosophers had heard Paul quietly, and with mingled curiosity and interest. But when they heard him talk of the resurrection of the dead they mocked and jeered,

and, joking among themselves for having come together to listen to such a fool, they went their ways. Echoes of that laughter on that bright day beneath the blue sky of Athens, and under the shadow of the temple of Athena, may still be heard in many parts of the world. Indeed, not a few of the wise among men, as men esteem the wise, and not a few among the so-called leaders of the Church, quietly dismiss or openly deny and mock at the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. Nevertheless this doctrine is an integral part of the Christian faith.

AN ACT OF GOD

In dealing with this great confession of historic and catholic and evangelical Christianity, we must remember that we are dealing with an act of God's power. Viewed from a purely human standpoint, the resurrection of the body is not only impossible, but unthinkable. But, as in the case of the Incarnation and the Atonement, and the Second Advent of Christ, we must relate the resurrection of the body to the power of God. We must remember what the angel said to Mary when she announced the birth of Jesus, "With God, nothing shall be impossible"; and with what Jesus himself said when he forgave the sins of the paralytic and healed him of his lameness: "Ye know not the power of God."

Because there are difficulties in this doctrine of

the resurrection, we must not be tempted to throw it away. To make this great statement of the Creed, "I believe in the resurrection of the body, and the 'Life Everlasting,' " mean only a natural or conferred immortality of the soul, because the limitation of our knowledge makes it difficult for us to conceive of a resurrection of the body, is simply to evacuate the great teachings of the New Testament of their force and to sacrifice their moral value.

THE BODY A TEMPLE

When we talk about the resurrection of the body, we must not forget the Scriptural idea of the body. When the law of capital punishment was decreed against a murderer, the reason assigned was that the murderer in killing a brother man and shedding his blood had violated the image of God; "for in the image of God, created he him." It was a fine saying of Novalis: "There is but one temple in the universe, and that is the body of man." This is brought out in Paul's statement to the believers at Thessalonica, that man consists of body, soul, and spirit, and that all is capable of being preserved entire without blame. In writing to the believers at Corinth, where sensuality was the prevailing and popular sin, Paul warns the believers against impure and unclean living, and tells them that the "body is for the Lord and the Lord for the body," and

that God, who raised up the Lord Jesus, will raise up their bodies. "Know ye not that your bodies are members of Christ?" And again, "Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you? Glorify God, therefore, in your body."

The idea that the body is a secondary and inferior thing of which we may well be rid when it is put in the grave, is absolutely foreign to the leading currents of thought in the New Testament.

EXPLICIT TEACHING BY CHRIST

The doctrine of the future existence of the spirit is assumed, rather than stated or defended, by Jesus and the apostles. Their most explicit and extended utterances have to do with the resurrection of the body. The belief in the resurrection of the body before Christ came was not nearly so widespread as the belief in the continued existence of the soul. In many learned circles, as the incident of Paul's being mocked at Athens shows, the doctrine of the resurrection was openly denied and ridiculed. But Jesus and St. Paul, and other of the apostles, are very explicit on this matter of the resurrection. Christ not only taught the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, but made himself the causative agent of it, and in his own resurrection illustrated, as far as it has been illustrated, the nature of the resurrection of the body.

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION OUR CLUE

The resurrection of Christ is not only the ground and the pledge of our own resurrection, but is also our only clue as to the nature of the resurrection. It is important to remember that in the resurrection of Jesus we contemplate the resurrection of One who assumed, and never relinquished, our humanity. It was not God who was raised from the dead; but Jesus Christ, the God-man. Christ's identity with man in the days of his humiliation is paralleled by a like identity in the resurrection. His resurrection body, therefore, is the norm of our own resurrection.

ST. PAUL'S METAPHOR

St. Paul in his great passage on the resurrection said: "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." The meaning would seem to be that the first blade that appears above the earth is the prophecy and the model of the whole crop which is to follow. Or, if we apply his figure to the harvest, then, the first garnered sheaves are a model of all that follow. The first to appear was Christ, and his appearing not only convinces us that others shall follow, but they shall be like him. St. Paul's marvelous combination of logic and imagination never shows to better advantage than in this winged metaphor.

CHRIST CAME BACK FROM DEATH

Omar sang of the myriads who had passed through the gates of death, not one of whom had ever returned to tell us what and where the dead are. Christian faith, however, maintains that there is one great exception. That exception is Christ, who brought life and immortality to light in his gospel. In the dread waste beyond the territory of this life and between this life and the immortal and heavenly life, there is one footstep—the footstep of Christ. When Christ appeared to his disciples in the resurrection it was in the form that they had known him and seen him. On one occasion he even displayed the marks of his wounds to doubting Thomas; and on another occasion asked the disciples, who thought he was a ghost, to touch him and feel him. At the same time, there was something mysterious and supernatural about the body which the disciples saw. There were times when they did not recognize it; and it could pass through closed doors as if the doors were not there; or could quickly transport itself from one part of the country to another. It was the same body, and yet not the same.

THE SAME, YET DIFFERENT

So we believe it will be with our own body of the resurrection, in comparison with the present body. It will be the same body—that is, the iden-

tity will be maintained, and yet a different body. St. Paul in his great deliverance on the subject of the resurrection uses the figure of the seed which disintegrates and dies in the ground, only to reappear in the blade and the grain. So is it, he says, with the resurrection of the body. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. Perhaps that phrase, "spiritual body," is as near as any New Testament expression can bring us to the meaning of the resurrection body. It is not a mere spirit which is raised; indeed, we could not speak of an awakening or resurrection of the spirit; but a body which is raised, and now changed into a spiritual body.

This present body, as Franklin put it in the quaint figure of his epitaph, which lies in the grave like the cover of an old book with its contents torn out and stripped of its lettering and gilding, will appear once again "in a new and more elegant edition, revised and corrected by the author." As the present body of our humiliation has been the agent and organ of the spirit in this life, so the body of the resurrection, the spiritual body raised in incorruption, in glory, and in power, will be the mighty and perfect agent and organ of the redeemed spirit. If man even in his present state is able to accomplish so much with the

body of corruption and of humiliation, what will he not be able to do when he has for his ally and the organ of expression the body of the resurrection?

In his "Castilian Days" John Hay, describing a picture of Van Dyck in the Prado at Madrid, and regretting that Van Dyck died so young, tries to imagine what he would have accomplished had he lived to the ripe age of Titian or Murillo, and says: "We are tempted to lift the veil that hides the unknown, at least with the furtive hand of conjecture, to imagine a field of unquenched activity where the early dead, free from the trammels of the lower world, may follow out the impulses of their diviner natures—where Andrea has no wife and Raphael and Van Dyck no disease—where Keats and Shelley have all eternity for their lofty rhymes—where Ellsworth and Koerner and the Lowell boys can turn their alert and athletic intelligences to something better than war."

LIFE EVERLASTING

Life everlasting is that stage of existence upon which the redeemed spirit enters after the resurrection, when it has been clothed upon, as Paul said, with its house from heaven. In the Apostles' Creed there is no statement as to future retribution; but the great truth is, of course, assumed, when we confess, "I believe in the life everlast-

ing." The undertone of the music of the Apostles' Creed is the future punishment of the unbeliever, the wicked, the finally impenitent. To say that we believe in life everlasting for the redeemed believer in Jesus, implies future punishment and retribution for those who are not so redeemed.

FUTURE RETRIBUTION

The doctrine of hell has almost dropped out of Protestant teaching and preaching. But it has not dropped out of the Scriptures, and certainly not out of the teachings of Jesus. When a man once said with delight to Voltaire that he had finally got rid of the idea of a hell, Voltaire answered: "I congratulate you. I have not yet been able to do that." Even a Universalist, like Horace Greeley, recognizes the necessity of future punishment in a government of God, and says: "I infer that in all worlds men will be chastised whenever they shall need to be, and that neither by suicide nor by any other device can a single individual escape the penalty of his evil designs. If a man is punished because he needs to be, because that is best for him, why should such discipline be restricted to this span of life?"

However solemn the doctrine of future punishment may be, however repugnant it may be to men of uneasy conscience, or of loose and flippant unbelief, it is well always to consider that the one authority on the shadow of life everlasting

is Christ himself. As if he anticipated the objections which would be made to this doctrine, and the efforts which would be put forth to explain it away, Christ makes himself the great teacher on this subject:

> "Christ on himself considerate Master took
> The utterance of that doctrine's fearful sound.
> The fount of love His servants sends to tell,
> Love's source; Himself reveals the sinner's hell."

Perhaps if Christian teaching to-day had in it Christ's proportion of reference to future punishment, there would be less hypocrisy and worldliness among professed Christians, and the Church would be a greater moral and spiritual power.

AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

The life everlasting is described for us, so far as it is described, in the terms of what it is *not*, and then in the terms of what it *is*. Negatively, heaven is the place and the state where there is no hate and no sea of sorrow and no curse of sin and no death. Imagine life, even, with this body of humiliation in such a world! What a life it would be! On the positive side we are told that the heavenly life is to be a life with Christ, a life in which we shall share the glory, for we shall see him as he is. We count upon it, too, that it will be a life in which the friendship and fellowship of this world will be continued. Christ said

to Martha, "*Thy* brother shall rise again." There was nothing in such a statement to comfort her, unless Christ meant that in the resurrection, of which the immediate and temporal raising of Lazarus from the tomb was a parable and a prophecy, Martha and Mary should know their beloved brother, Lazarus. Immortality without recognition, recollection, or memory would be a thing to be dreaded rather than to be desired.

THE MUSIC OF HEAVEN

In the Middle Ages a monk, Brother Thomas, went out from the monastery to gather sticks in the forest. As he was engaged in this task, he heard the singing of a bird, and ceased from his labors, entranced with the music. Such singing, he thought, he had never heard before. After a little the bird stopped singing, and the monk, taking up his bundle of fagots, returned to the monastery. When he rang the bell at the gate the brother who opened the door asked him who he was. "Why," said the monk, "I am Brother Thomas." "But," said the other, "there is no Brother Thomas in this community." "But," protested the monk, "I left the monastery not more than an hour ago to gather sticks in the wood." Then, carefully scrutinizing him, the brother at the gate said, "I now recall that when one of our aged brothers died many years ago, he told us of a certain Brother Thomas who had

gone out into the woods to gather sticks and had never returned." They supposed that he had been devoured by the wolves.

What Brother Thomas, entranced with the singing of the birds, supposed to be just a few minutes was a hundred years. So will it be with the music and the joys of the heavenly life.

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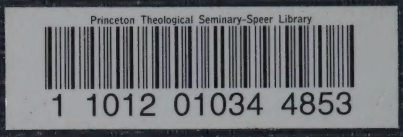
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